

Hickman
Yu
Pérez
Reis
Dauterman
Noto
Booth
Asrar
Mobili



Reign of X
Vol. 2



MARVEL

Hickman
Yu
Pérez
Reis
Dauterman
Noto
Booth
Asrar
Mobili



Reign of X
Vol. 2



MARVEL

Hickman
Yu
Alanguilan
Gho



Reign of X
Vol. 1



[kra_]
[koa_]

[reign_of_x]

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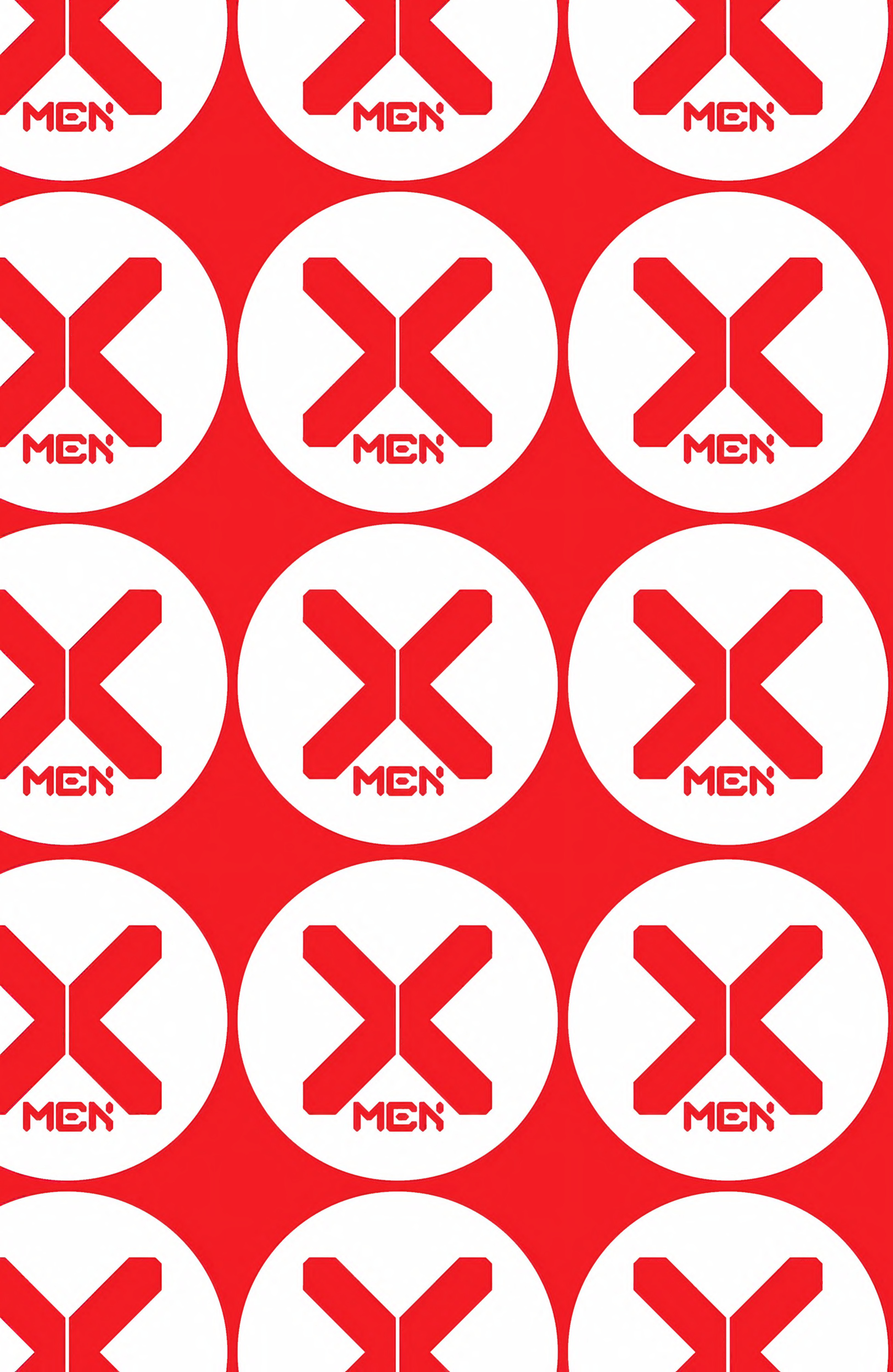
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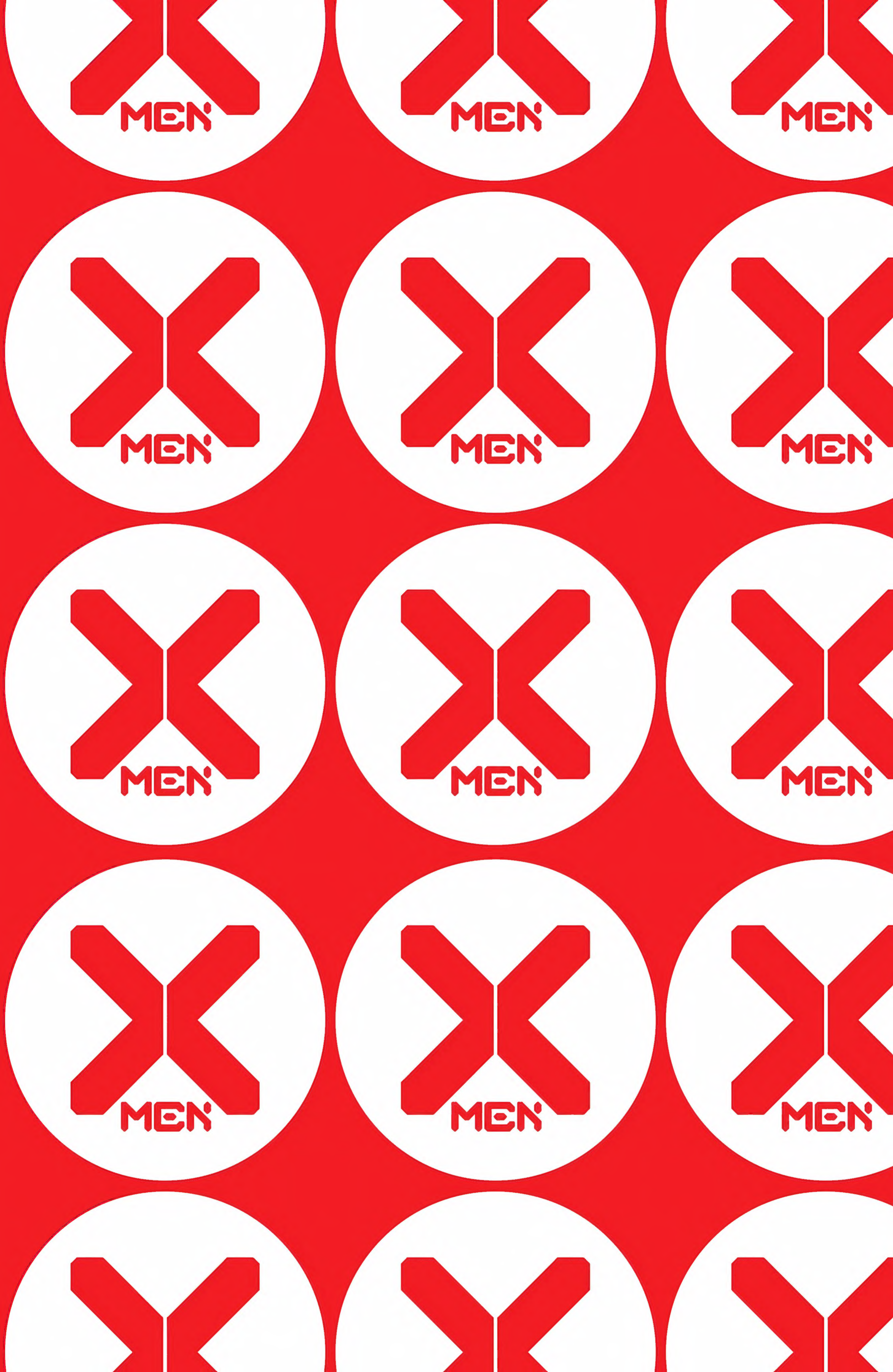
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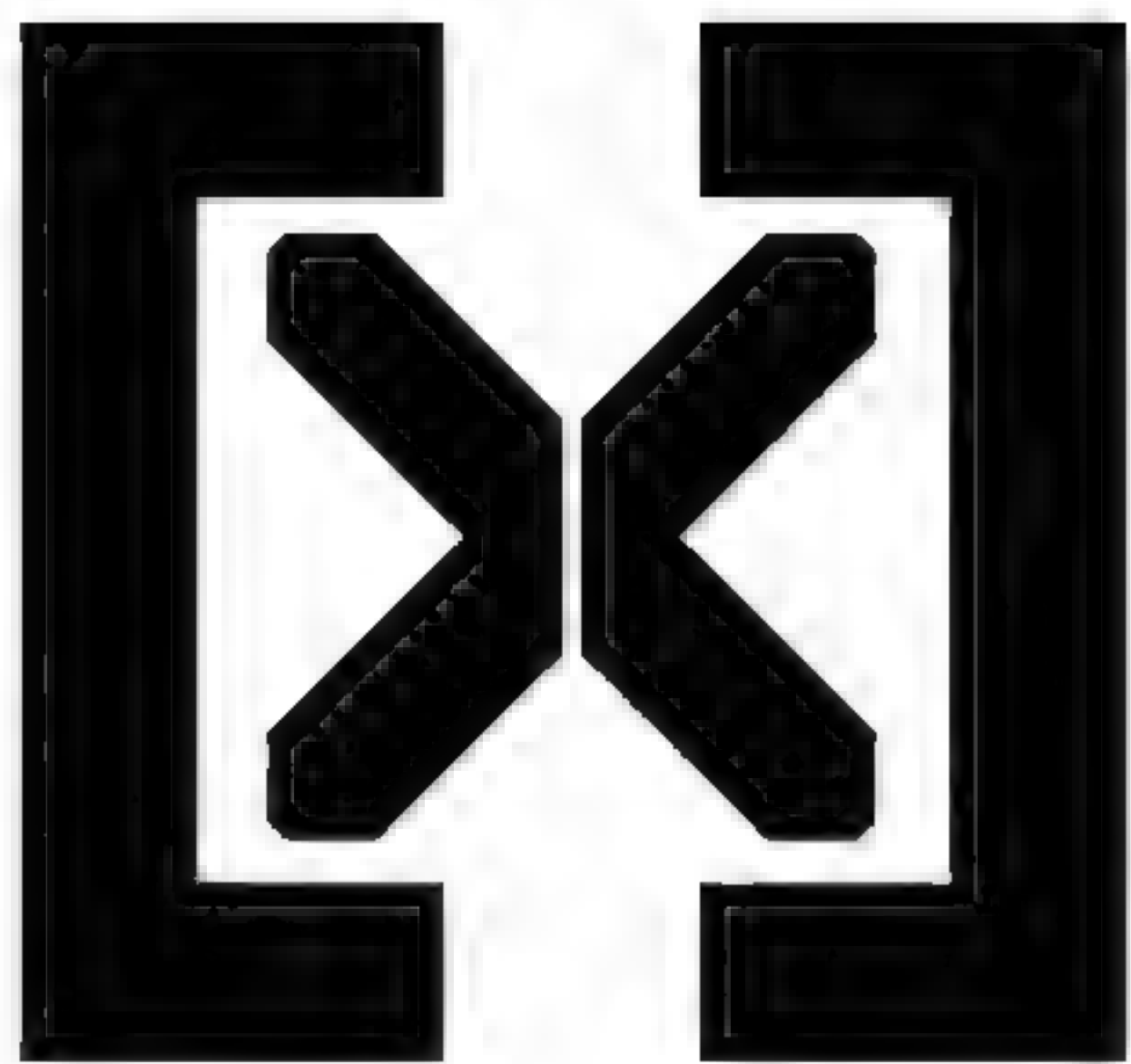






Wait & See

12



[kra_[0.1]
[koa_[0.1]

[kra_[0.X]
[koa_[0.X]

WAIT & SEE

Even before becoming one of the founding architects of the mutant nation Krakoa, Magneto's destiny was irrevocably intertwined with that of mutantkind. Magneto's single-minded goal to protect and uplift his people above all else has been an ongoing source of strife -- but rarely has he seemed so close to achieving it...



Magneto

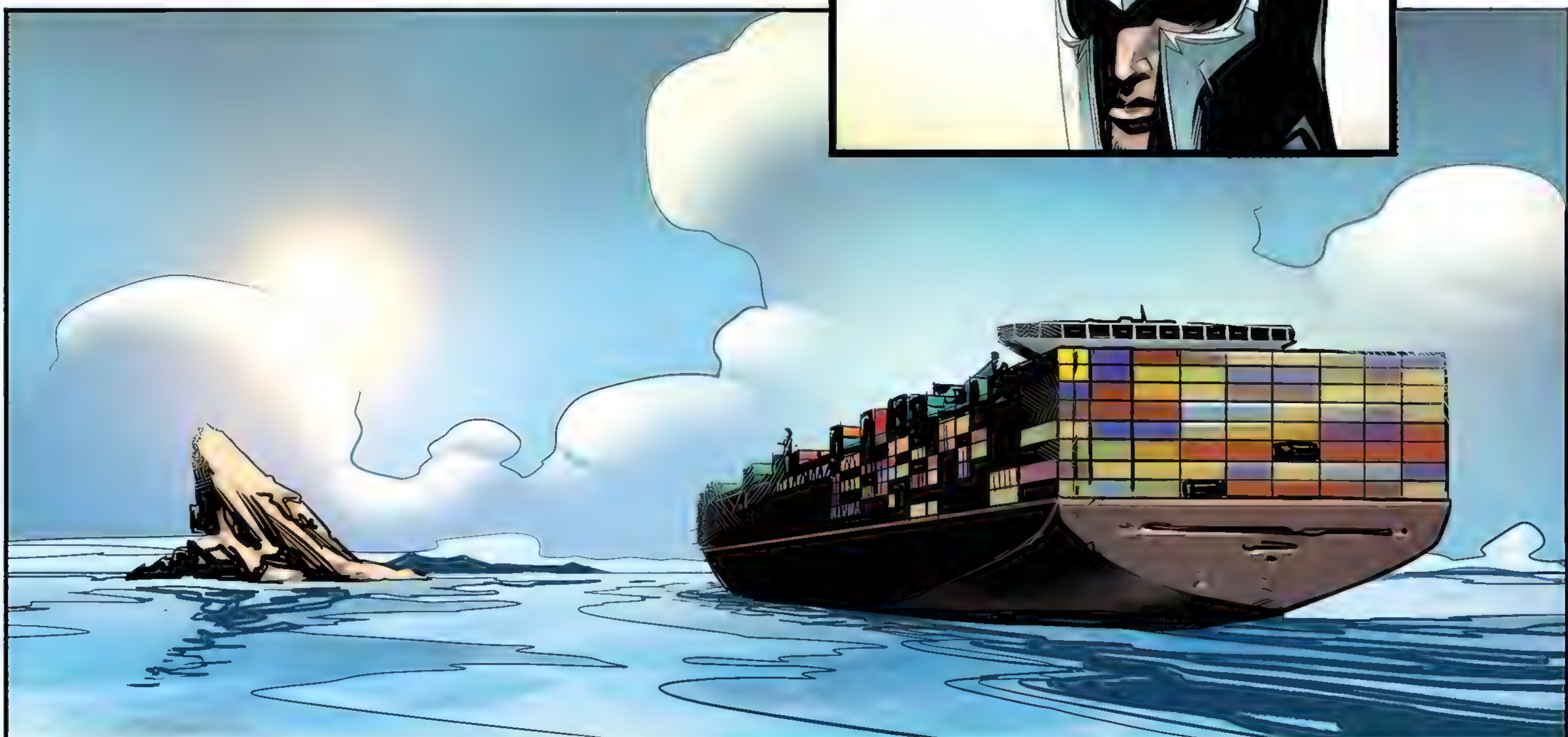
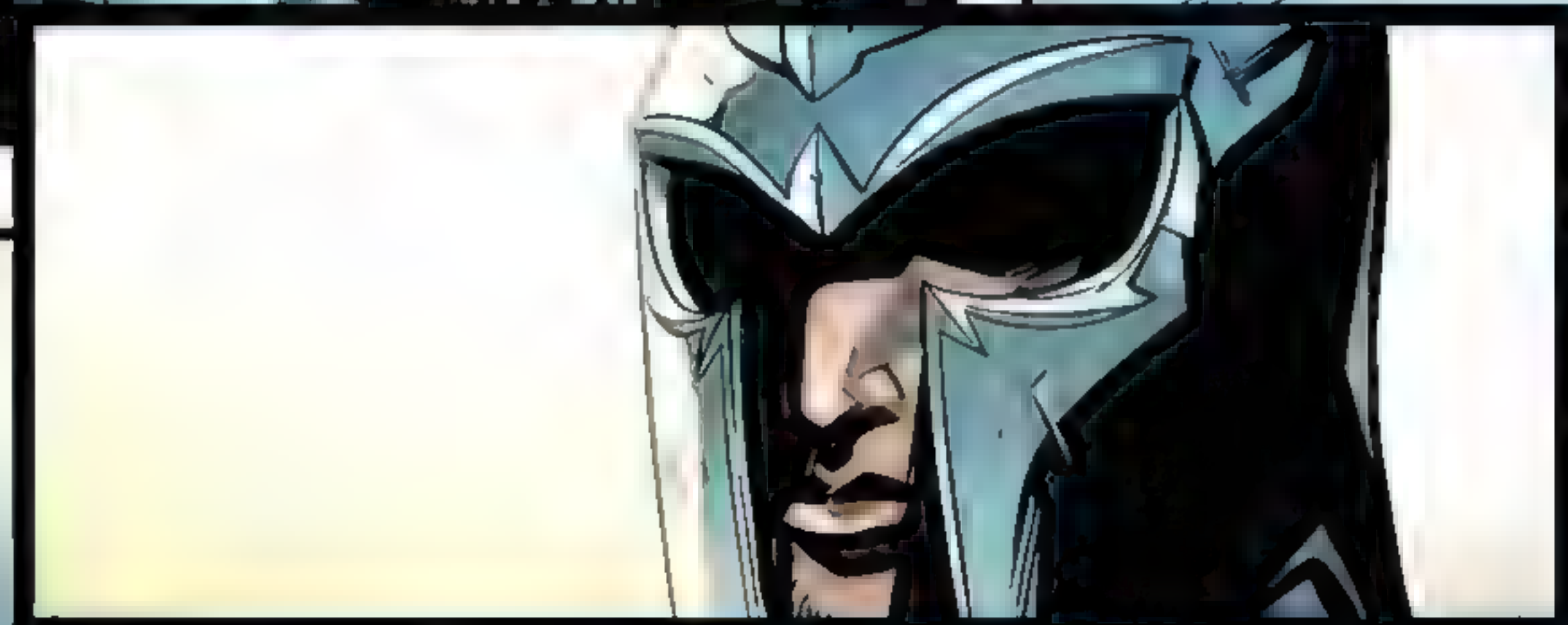
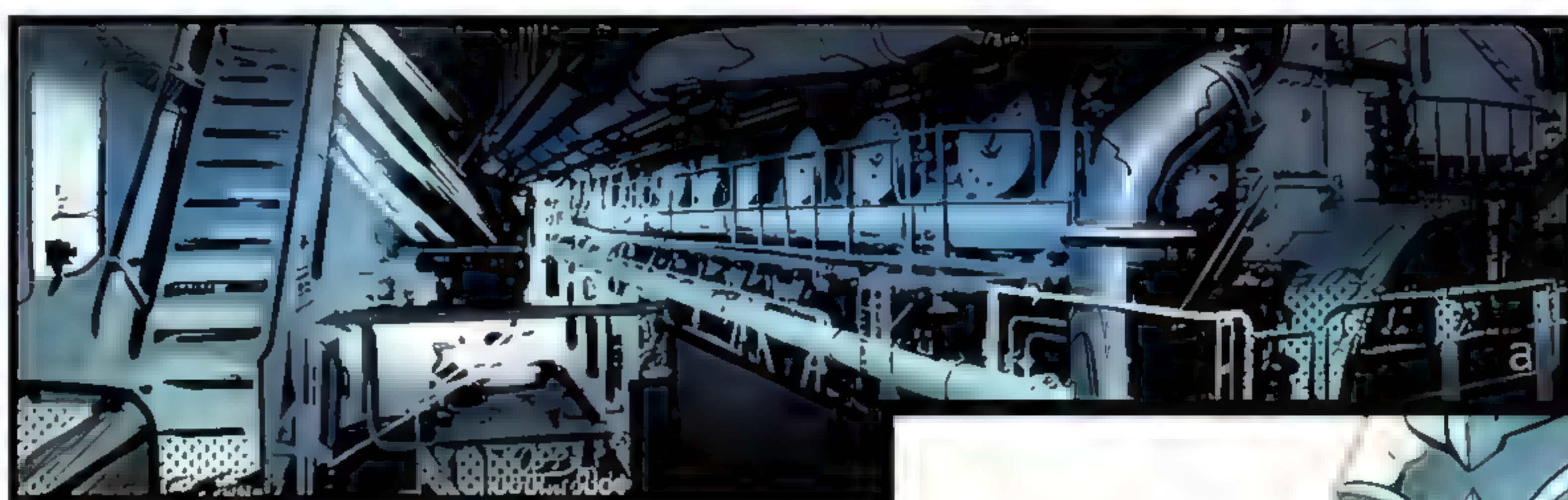


Emma Frost



Namor

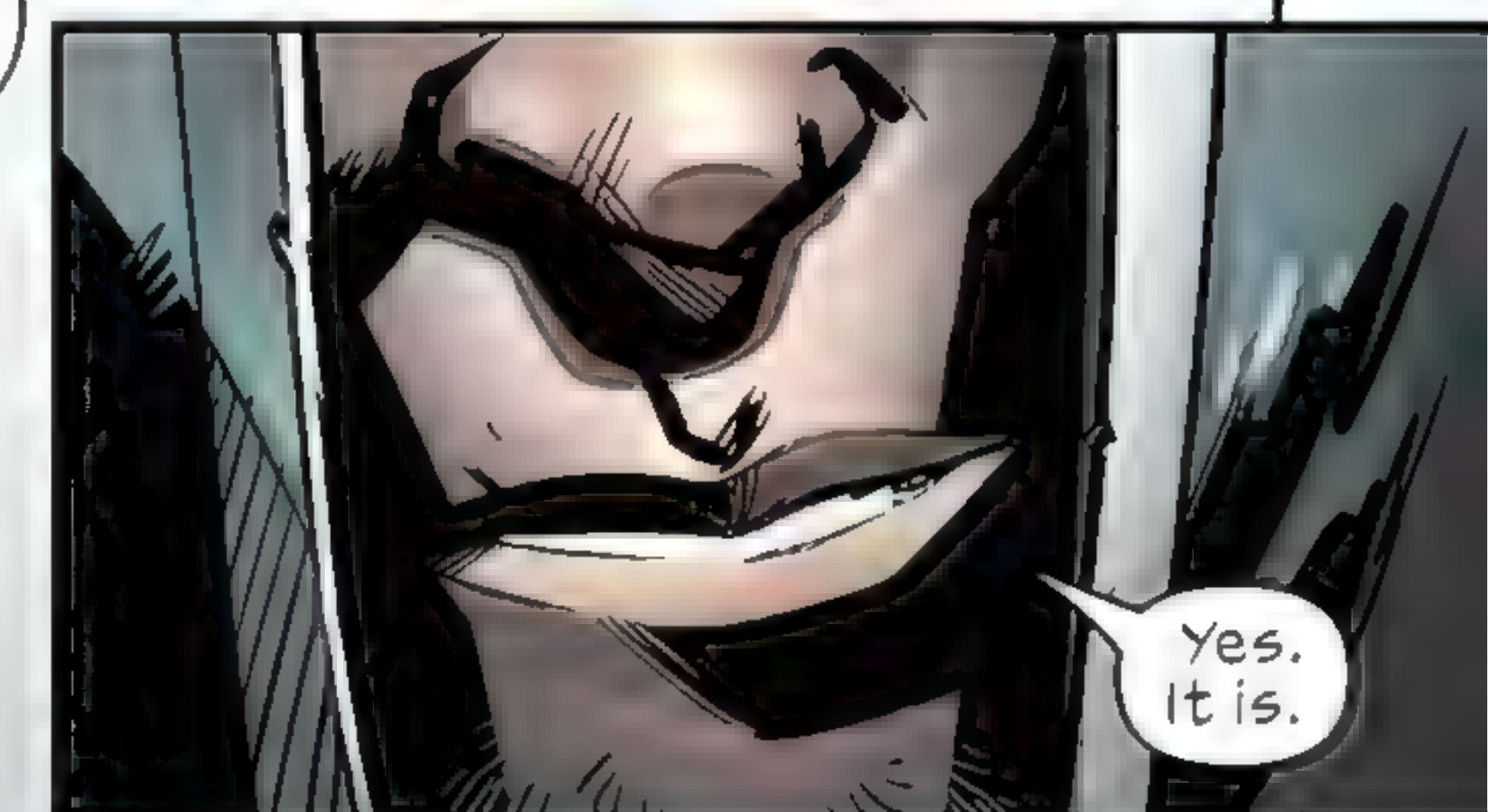
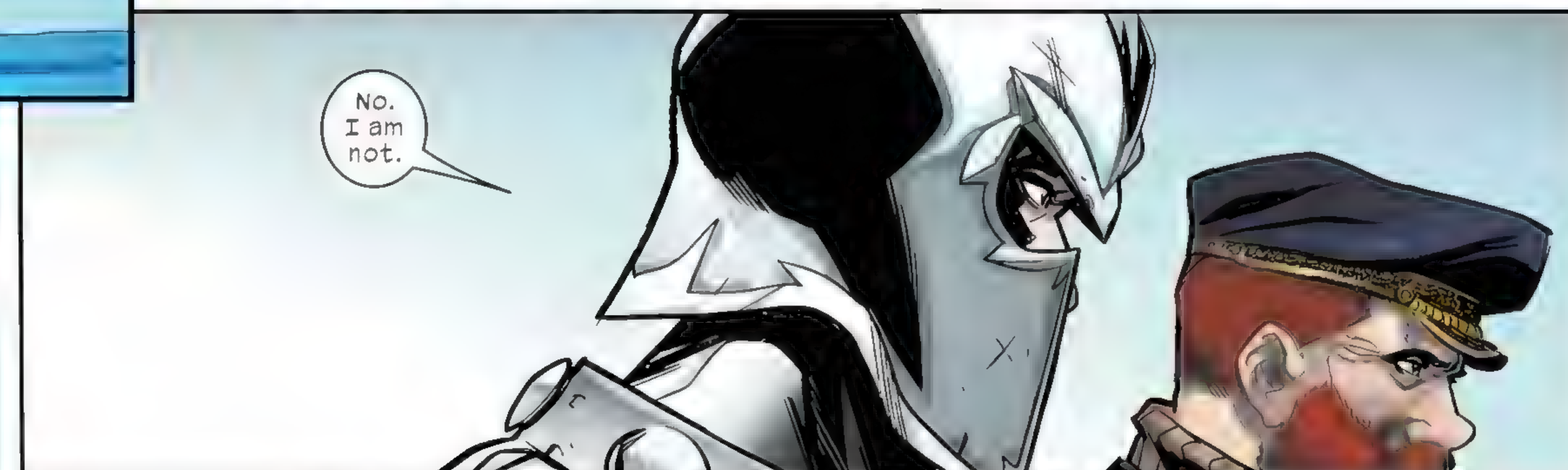
NOW.

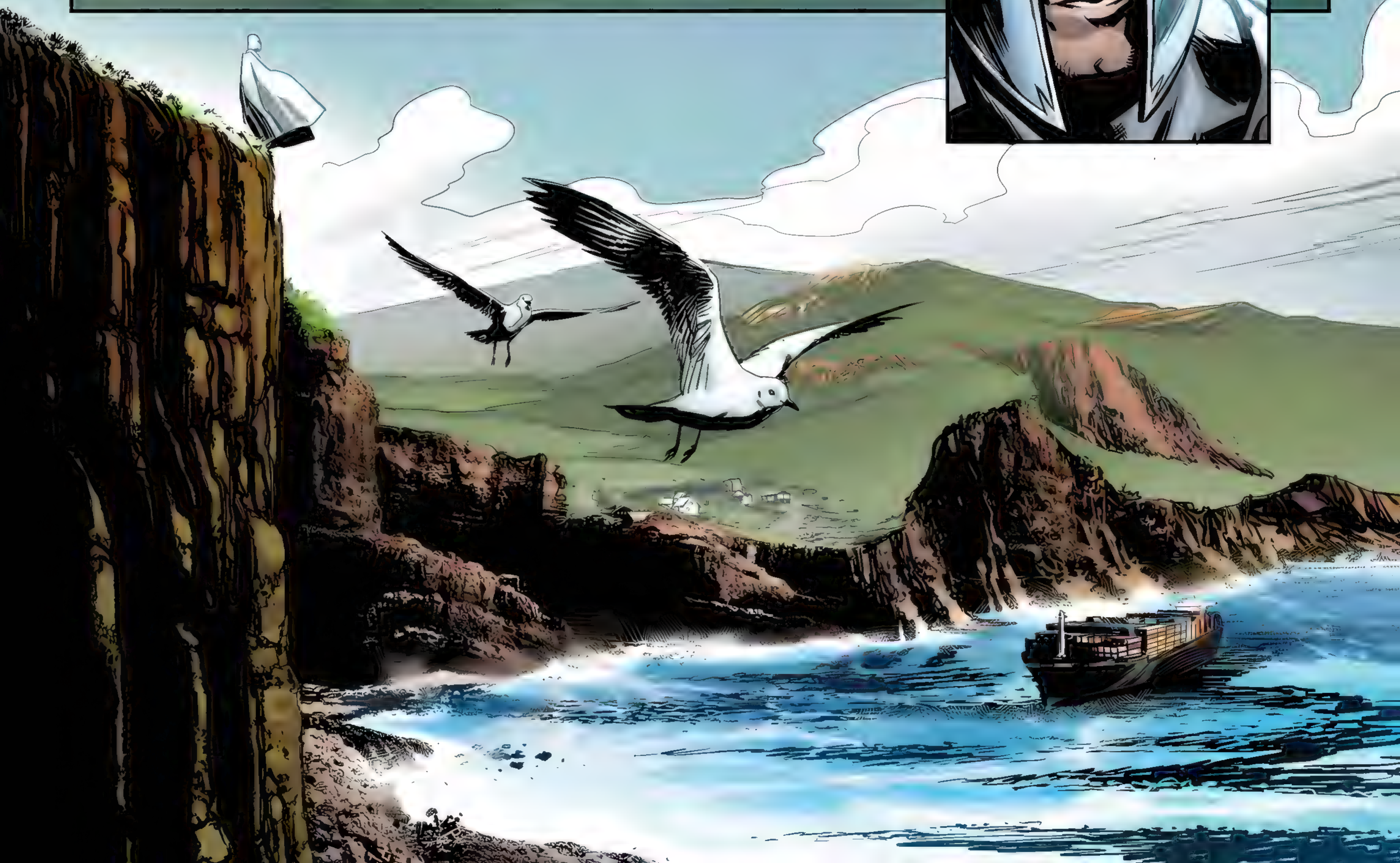
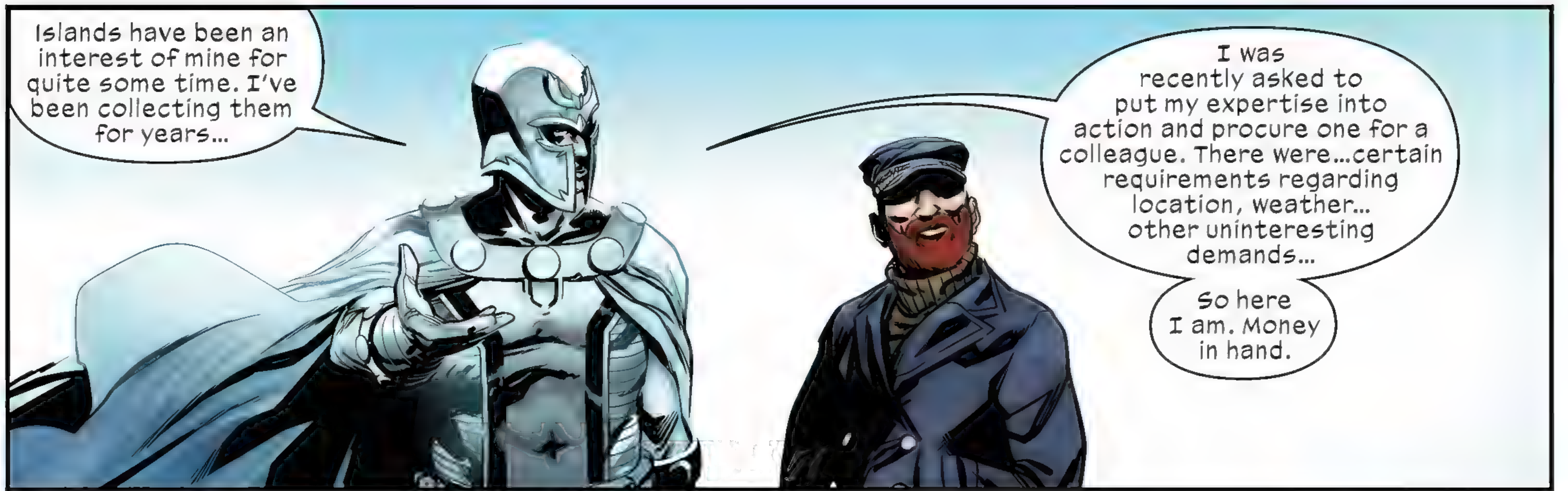


Mykines.
The Faroe
Islands.



But you, friend, don't strike me as the picture-taking type.





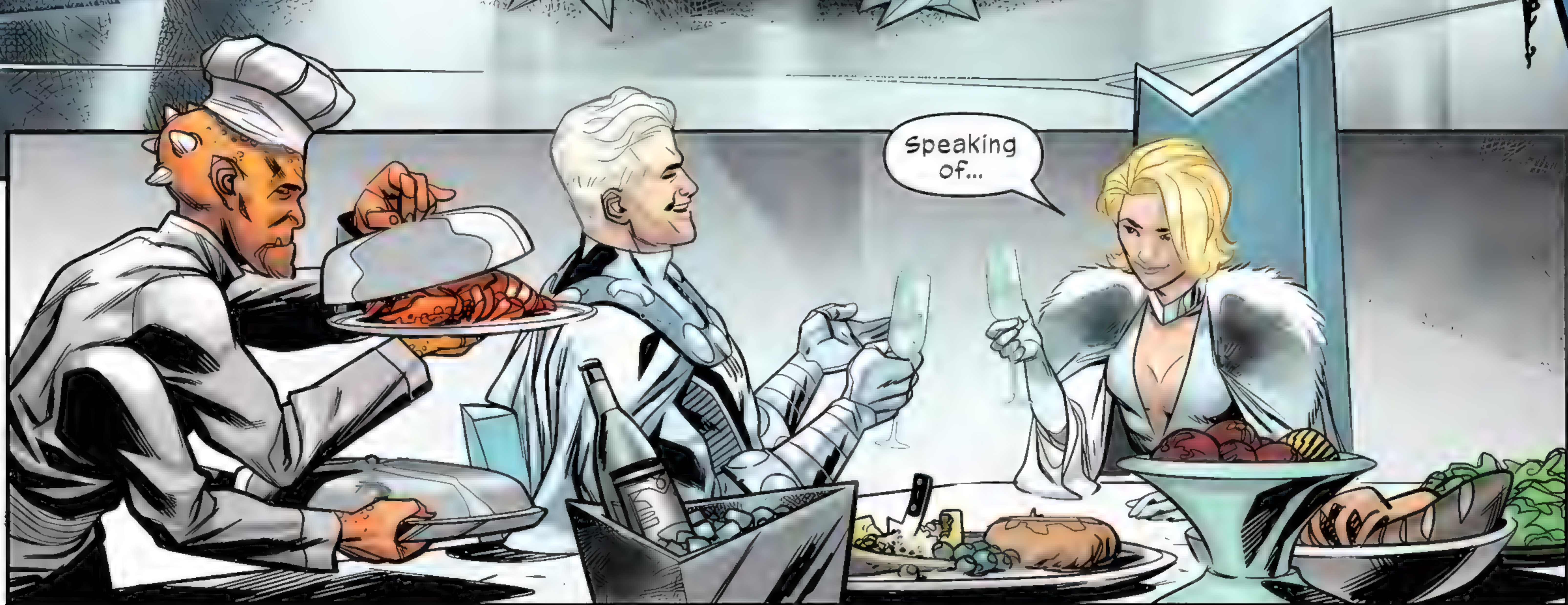
Then.





Honestly, I'm a little insulted that it's taken you this long to invite me.

Word has spread, Emma. There's no hiding the mutant miracle you have running your kitchen.

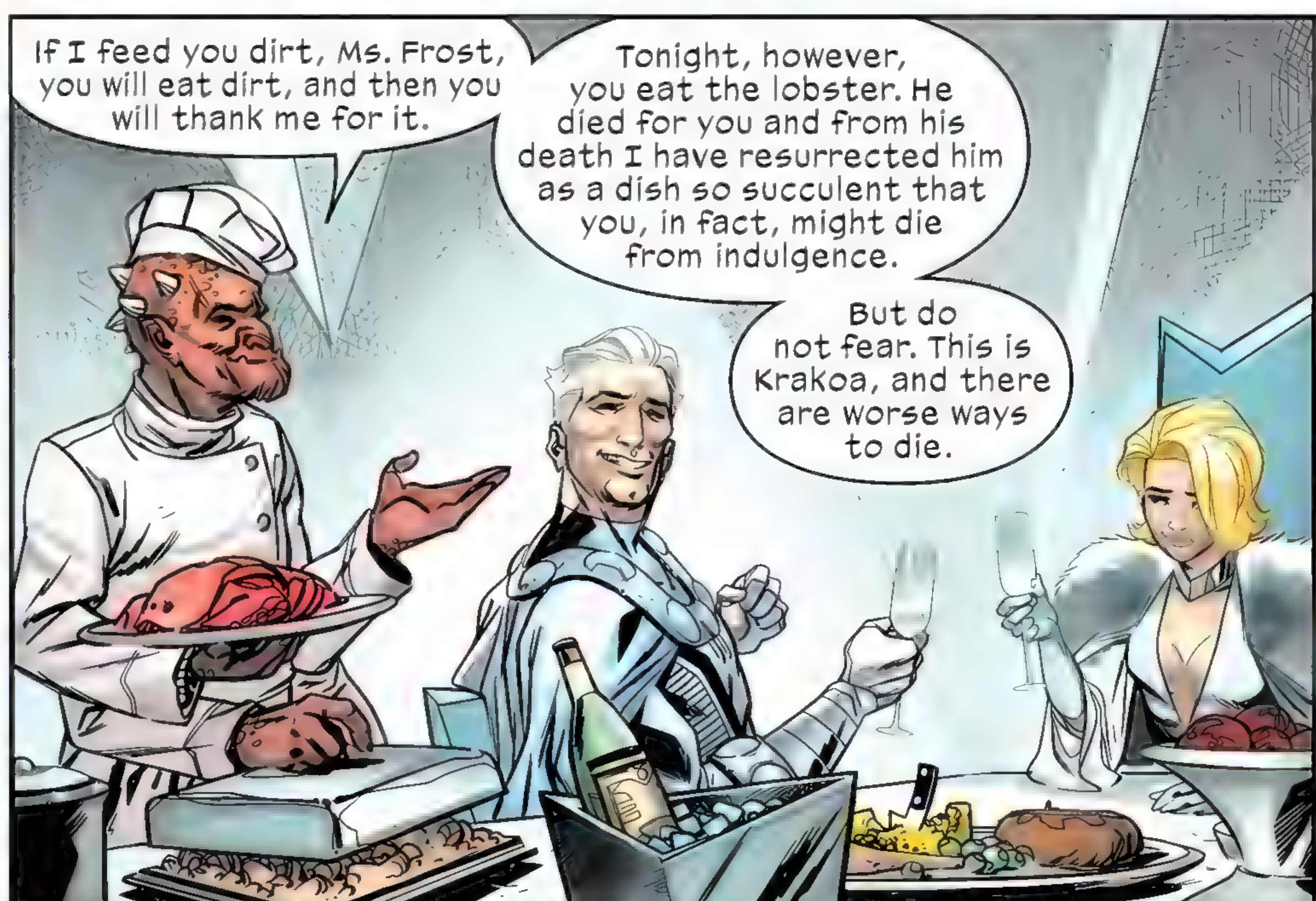


Speaking of...



Saucier here is a gift. Ask him, he will tell you.

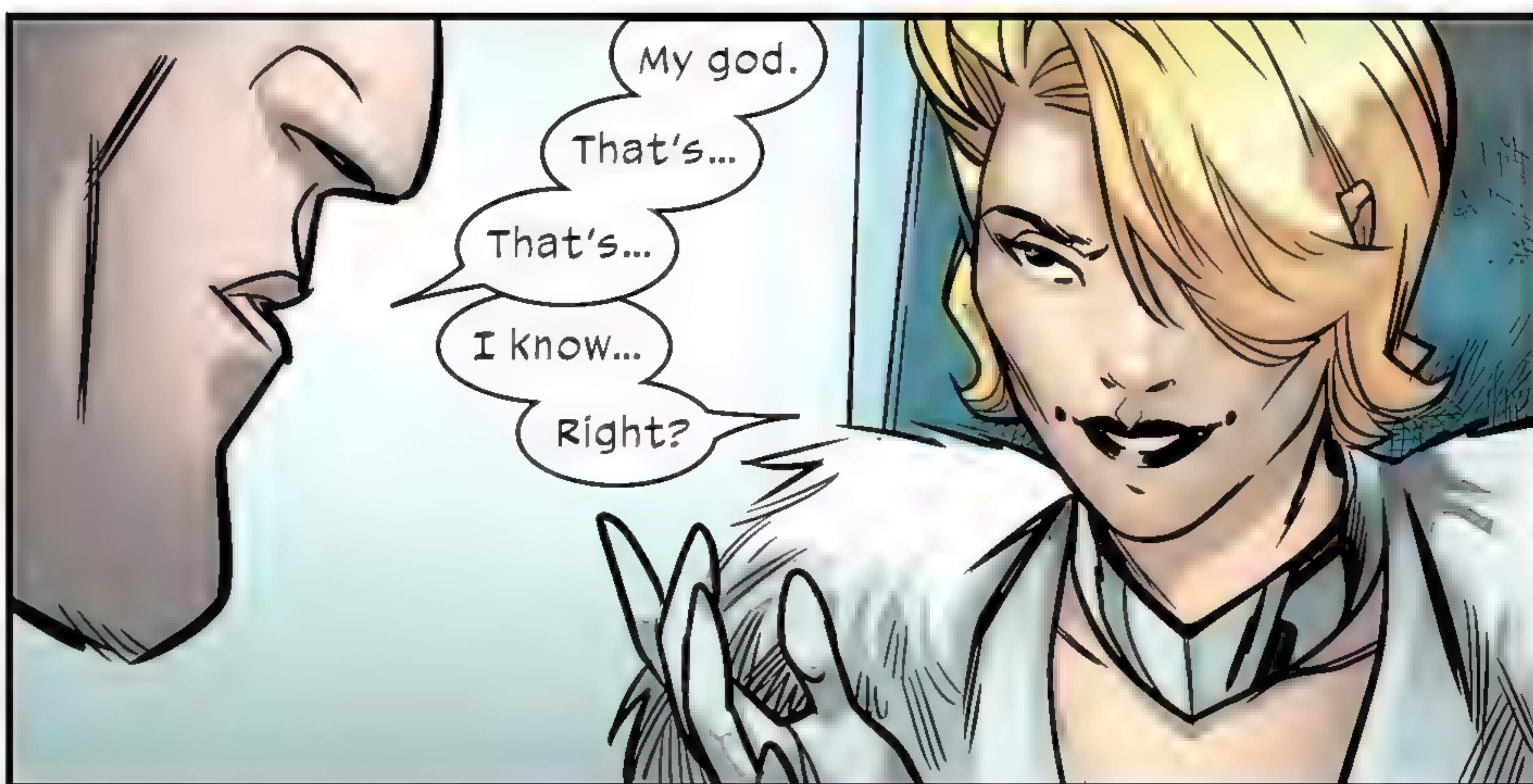
And if you doubt him, he will threaten you with dirt.

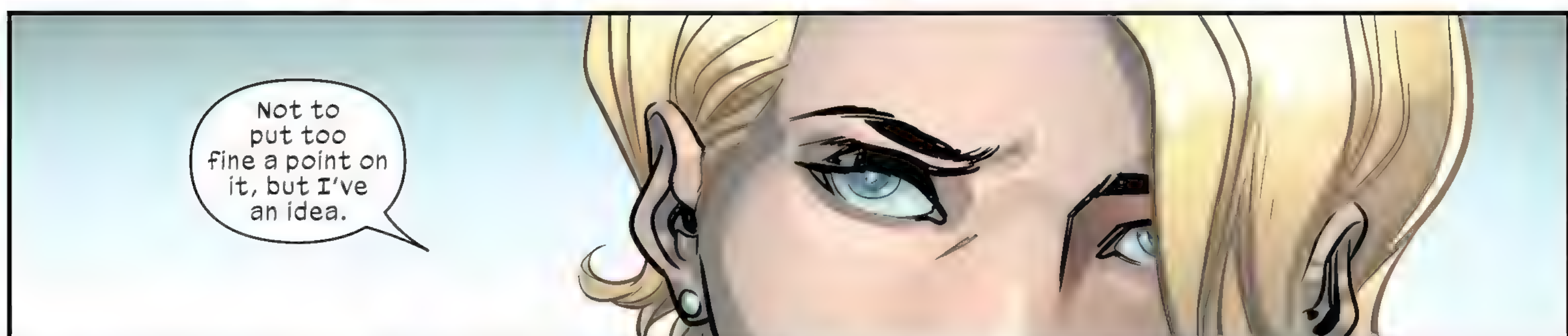


If I feed you dirt, Ms. Frost, you will eat dirt, and then you will thank me for it.

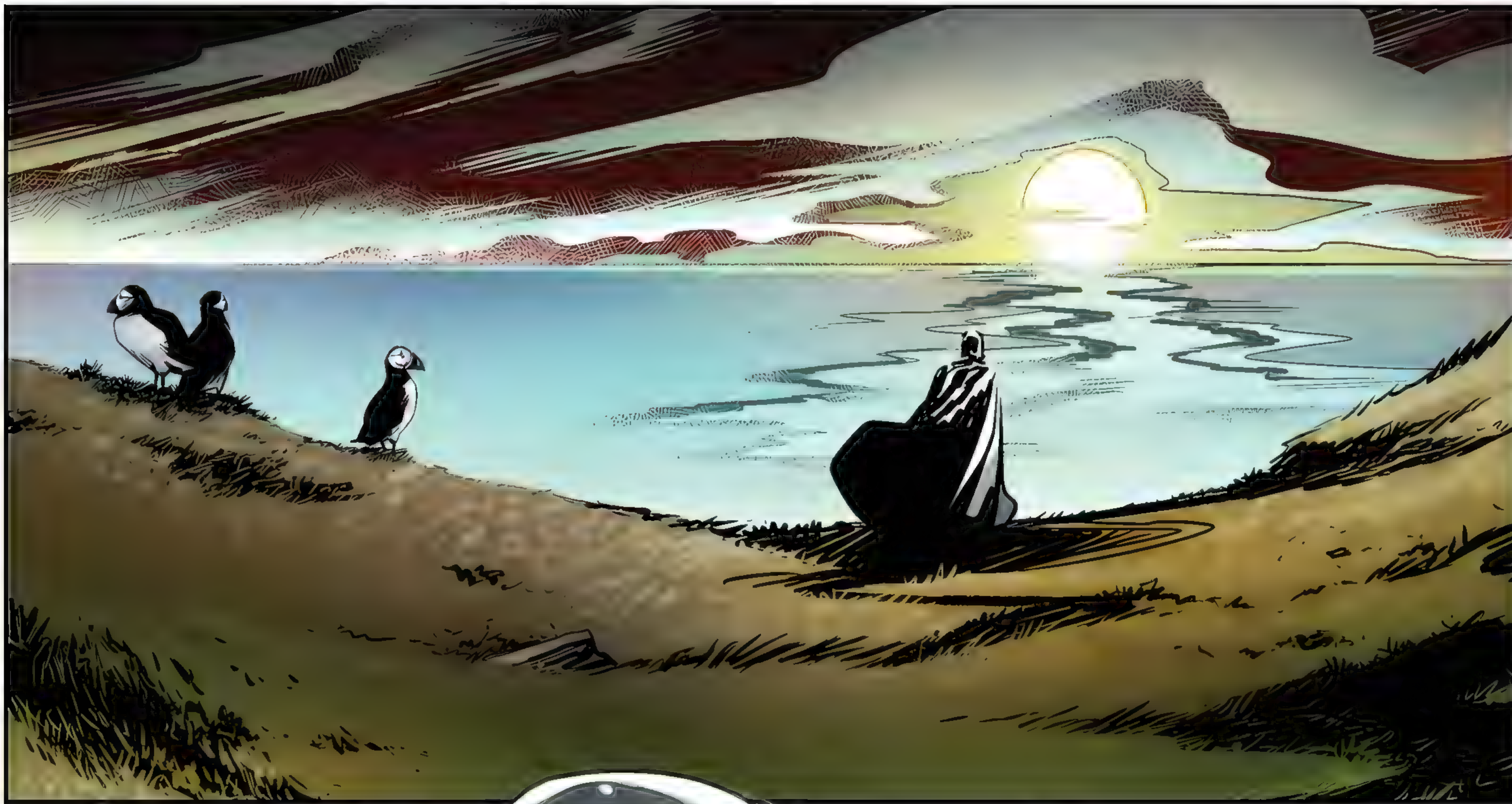
Tonight, however, you eat the lobster. He died for you and from his death I have resurrected him as a dish so succulent that you, in fact, might die from indulgence.

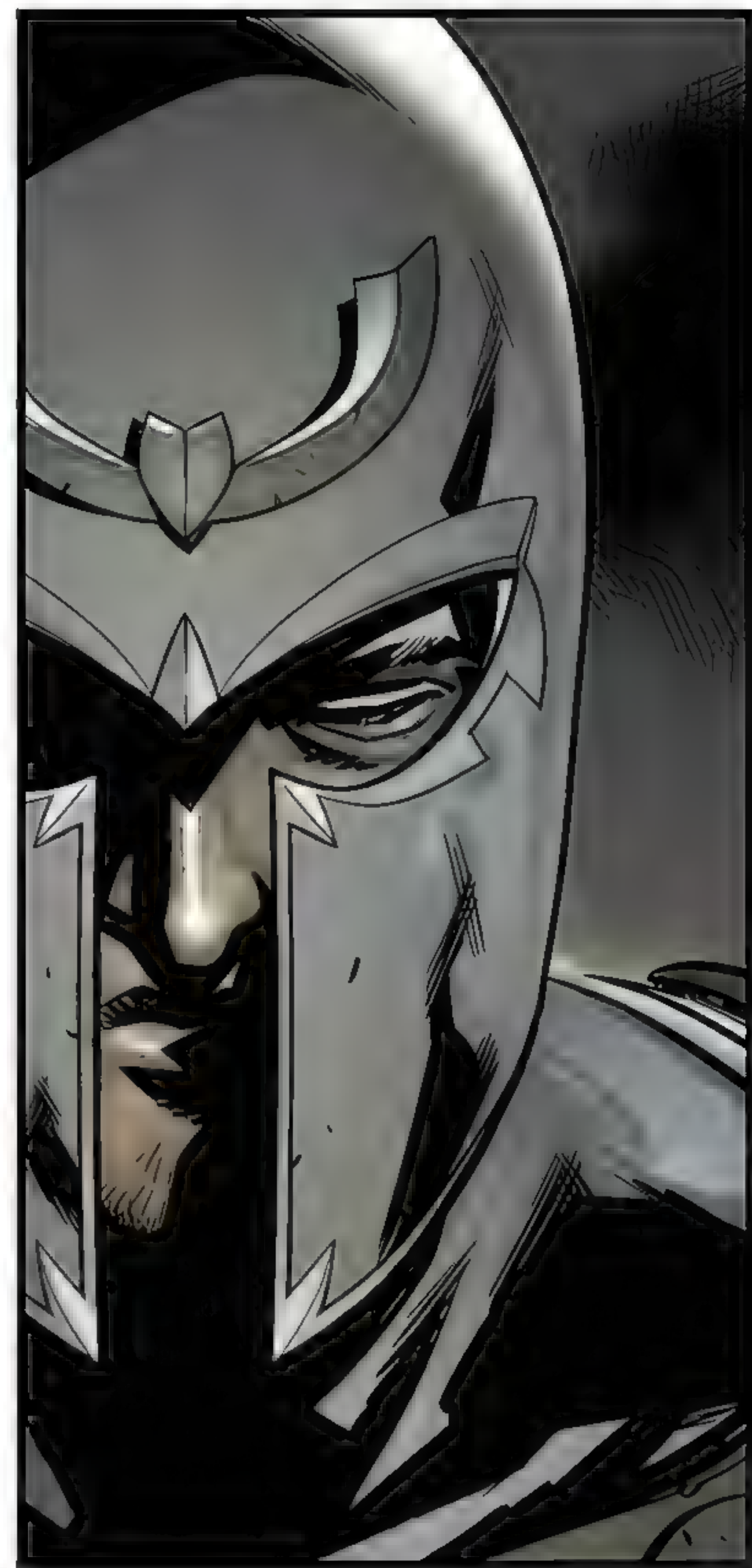
But do not fear. This is Krakoa, and there are worse ways to die.



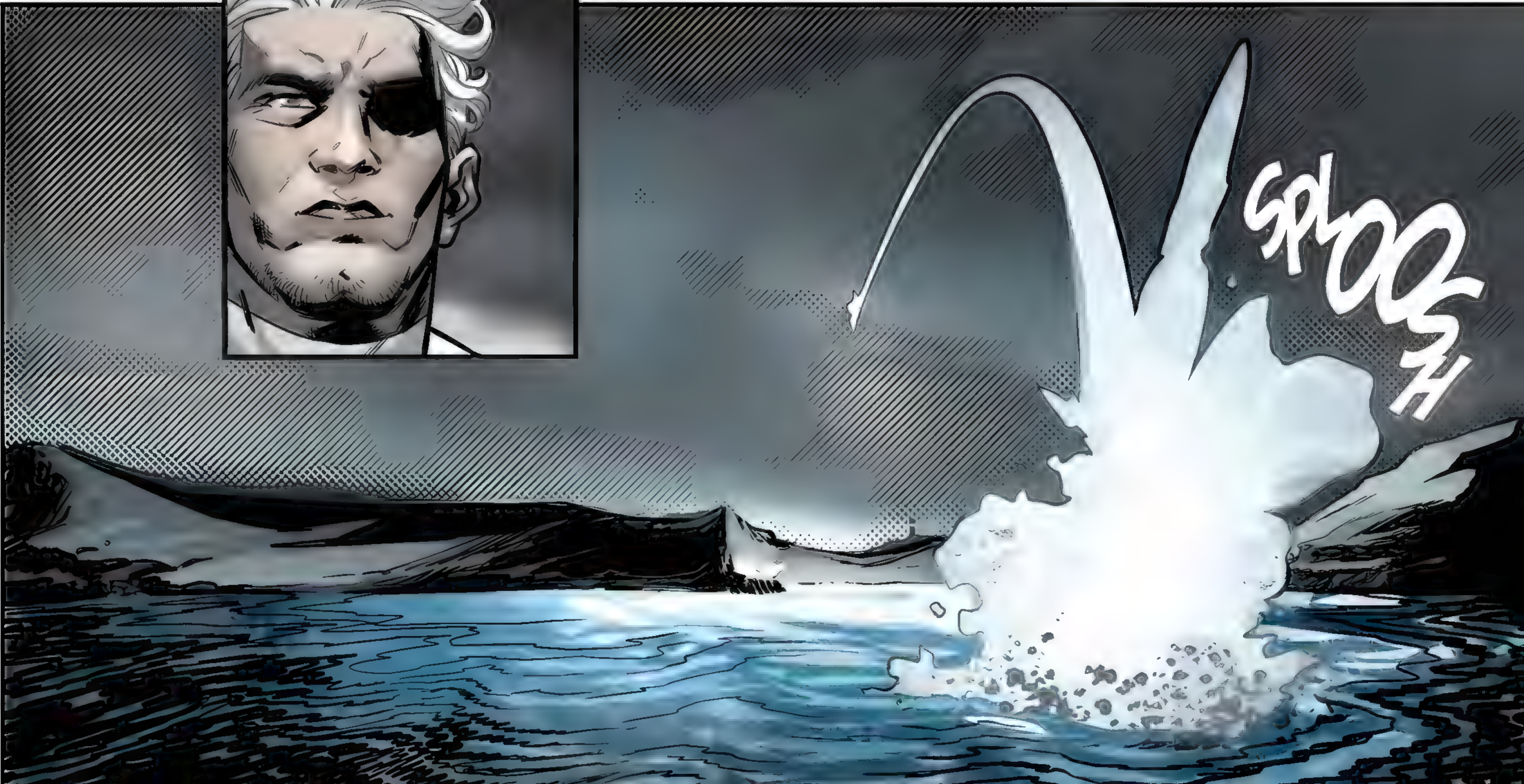


NOW.



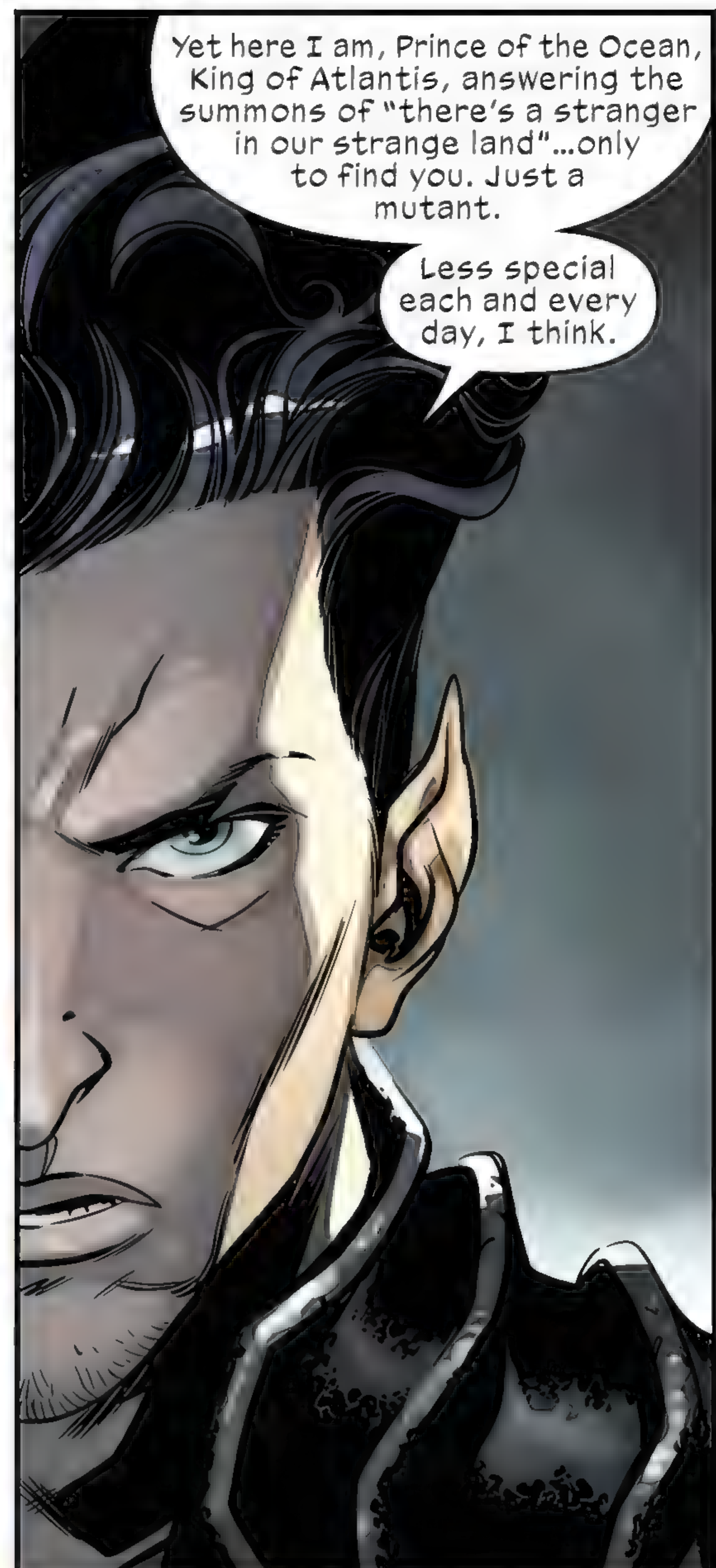


"...that sounds like him."





As a boon for diligent service, I gave the caretaker here an Atlantean gresh to contact me if ever he needed my assistance. Need, not want...



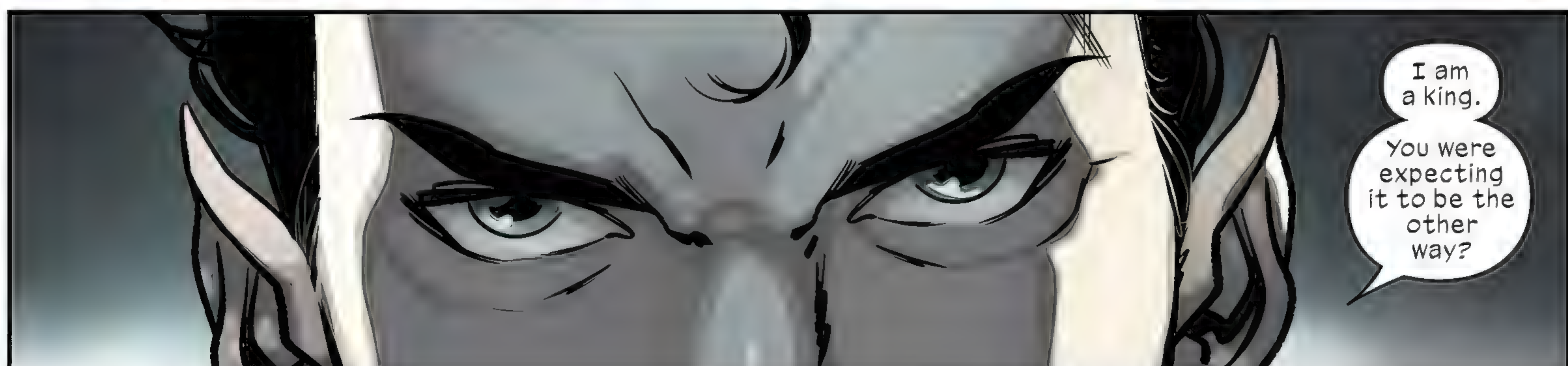
Yet here I am, Prince of the Ocean, King of Atlantis, answering the summons of "there's a stranger in our strange land"...only to find you. Just a mutant.

Less special each and every day, I think.



Hmmm.

You kept me waiting.



I am a king.

You were expecting it to be the other way?



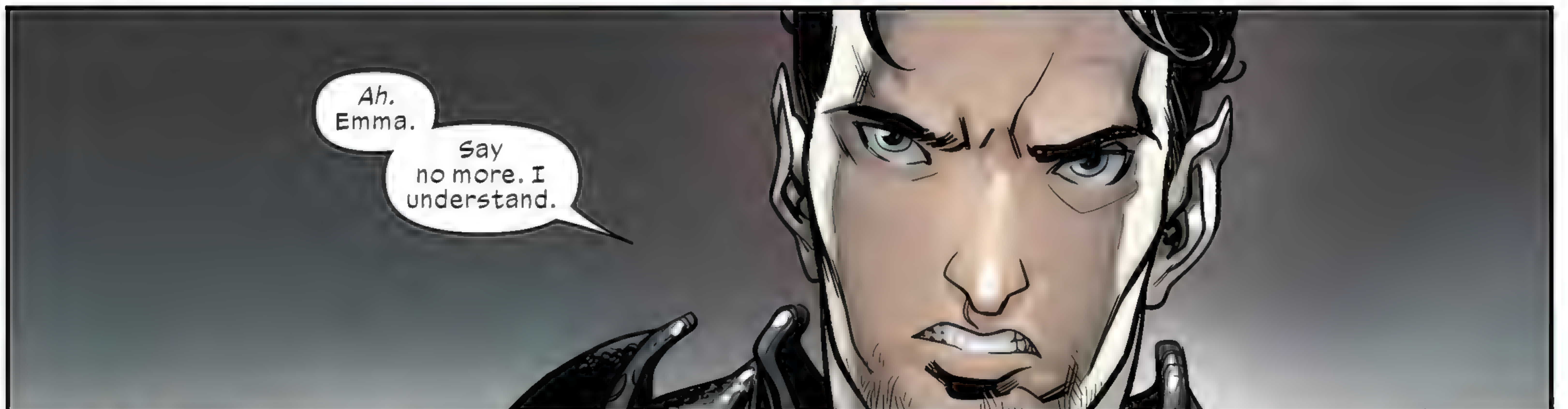
Most would
be thankful for
the audience.

Either way,
I suggest you
use it...and quickly.
I have matters of
dark water to
deal with.



I find I am more thankful with
each passing day, Namor, but
to be clear, I'm here on
someone else's
behalf.

It's the
White Queen
who would like
to lease your
island.



Ah.
Emma.

Say
no more. I
understand.



Then we
can come to
terms?

That
depends...do
you feel like
a swim?

I
could take
a dip.

The
Molloy
Deep.

What
exactly are
we looking for,
Namor?

A month
ago, Andromeda
sent an Atlantean
exploratory team
into the deepest
part of this
trench.

Seismic
activity had
cracked the wall,
and the great
siren song was
heard.



The team
was never heard
from again.

Now I
am here to see
what happened
to them.

See?
It's
pretty
dark down
there.

It's
the ocean,
Magneto.

The
sun is for thin
skin and weak
hearts...

"...the deep is for those made of sterner stuff."

Hrmpt!

The unexpected things you find under hundreds of thousands of years of earth.



What is it?

It's the spiral of the Old Kings of Atlantis. Uhari, I think.

Can you open it?

It's a brass-tin-iron composite. Yes.

Should I?

Only one way to know for sure.







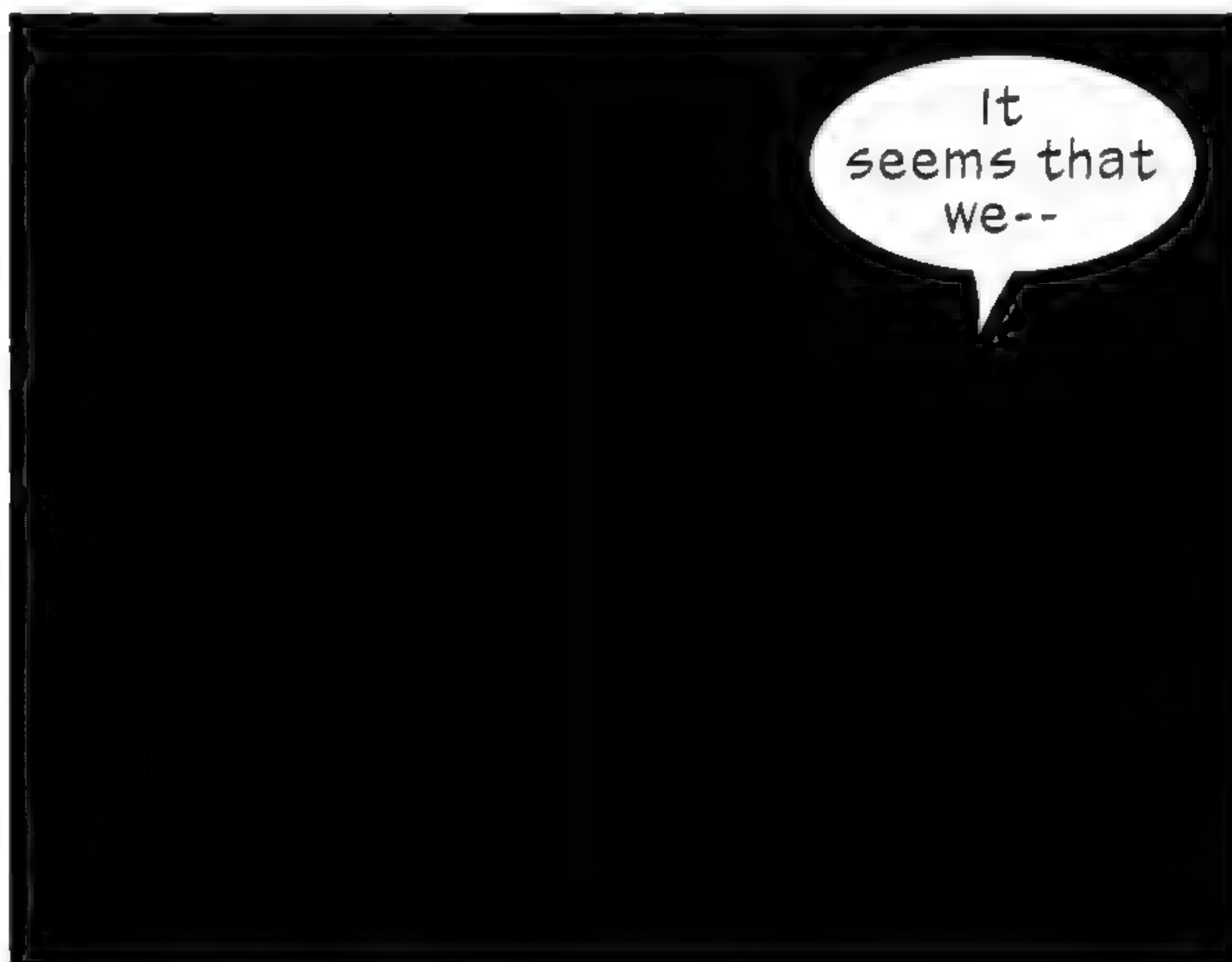


--Atlantis.

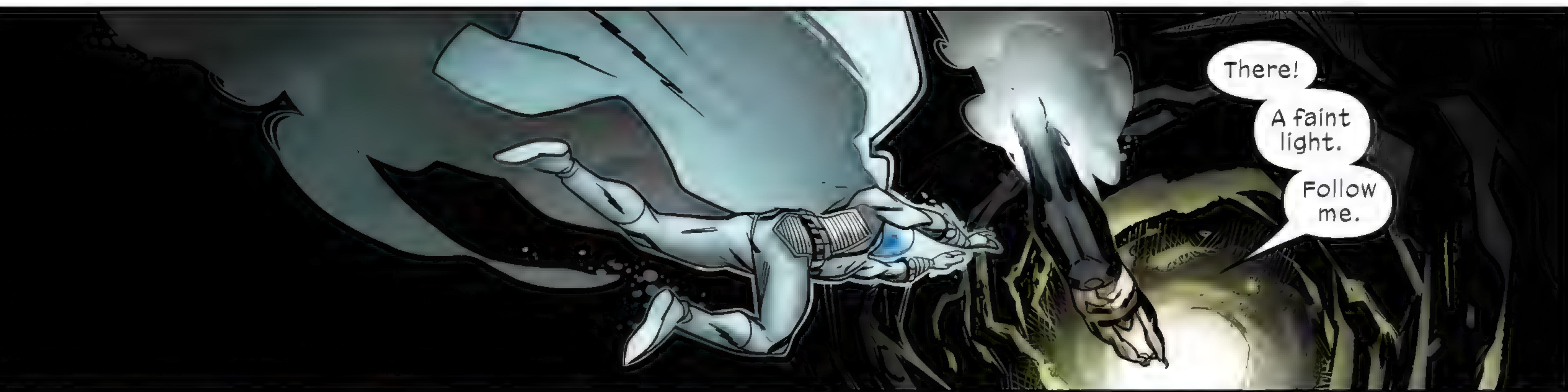
Hrmph!



This is going well, I think.



It seems that we--



There!

A faint light.

Follow me.



A man of the sea.

And a man of the earth.

What seek you, strangers?

Weeks ago I lost a group of explorers--scientists--in these deep waters.

I'm trying to find them.



Ah. Their bones are around here somewhere. Scattered with millennia of others.

Soon to be joined by yours, if you choose as they did.

Incorrectly.



See the spiral. See the stone.

Choose one and live. Choose the other and die.

There is only the choice and only in choosing correctly can you find your way back to shallow waters.

Ah!



This is simple.



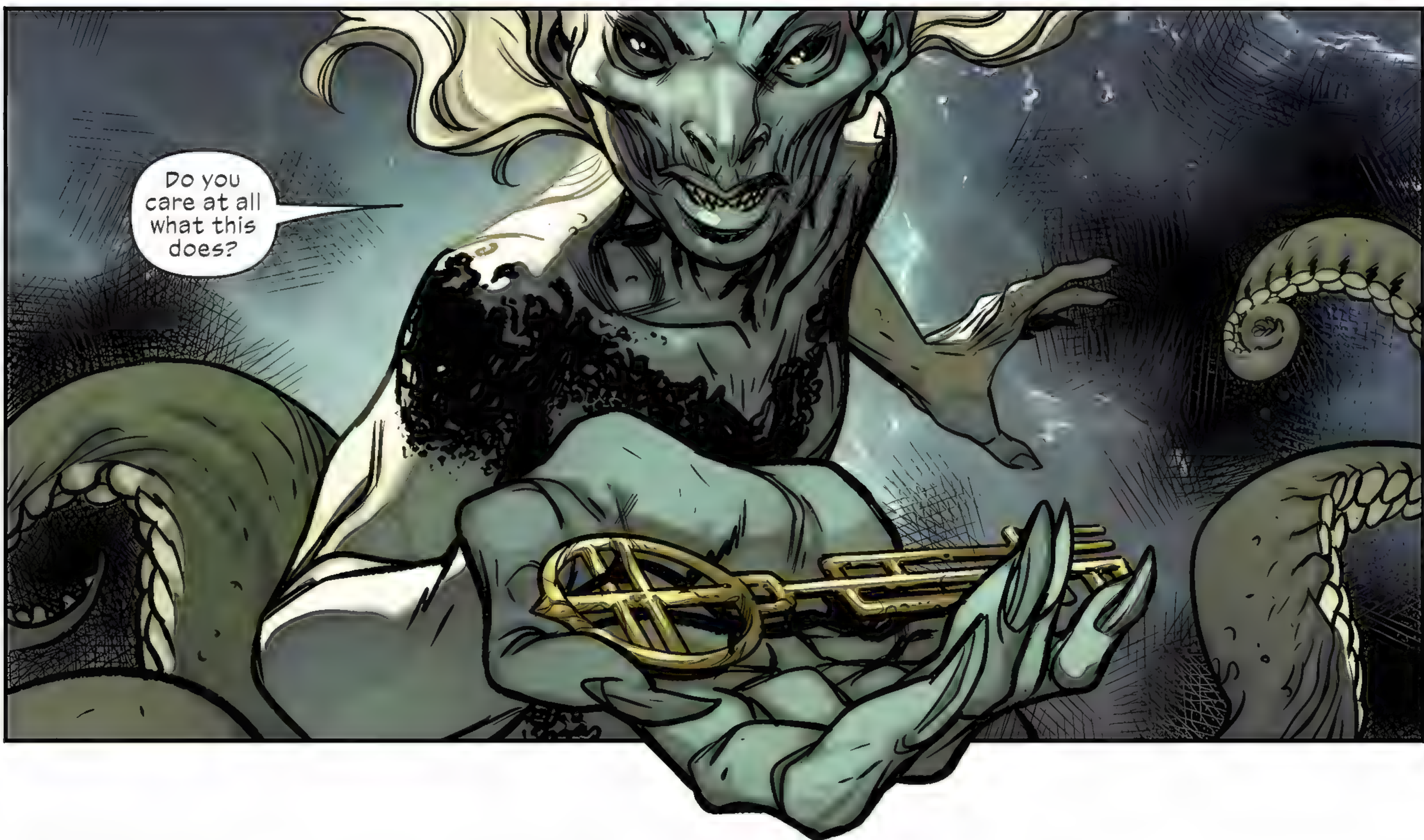
The spiral is the symbol of the Uhari...

Now, I want you to tell me--



HRK! K! K!

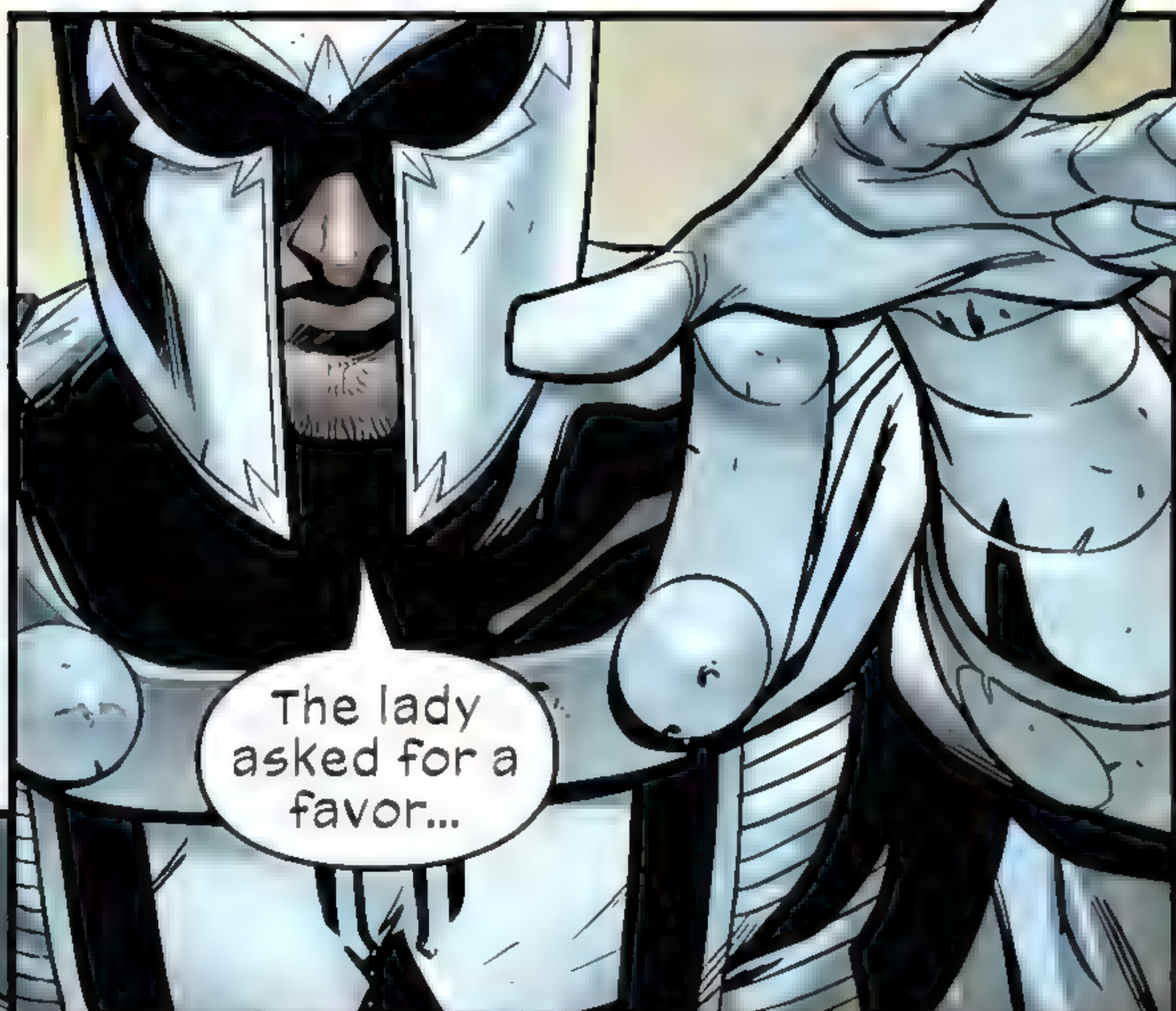
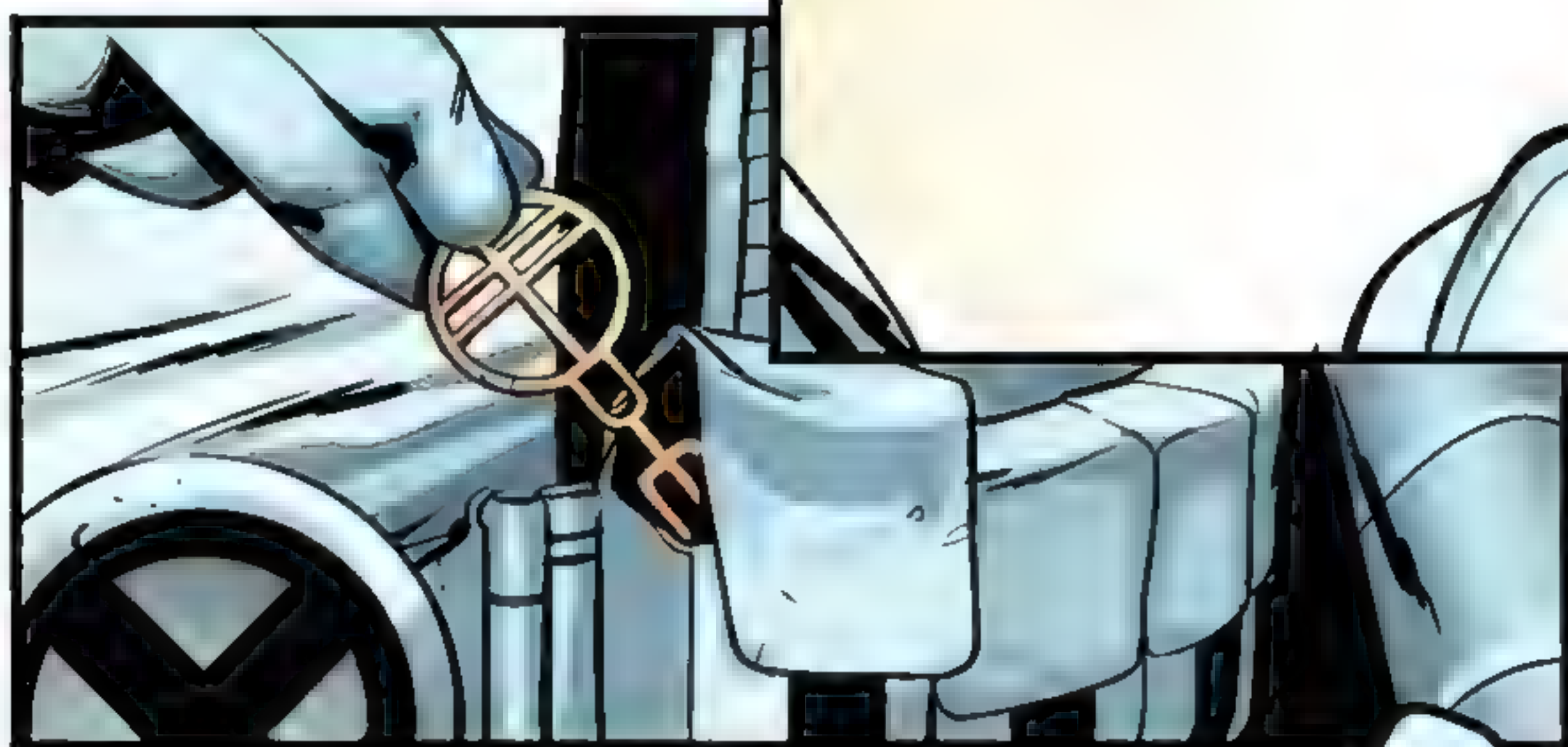
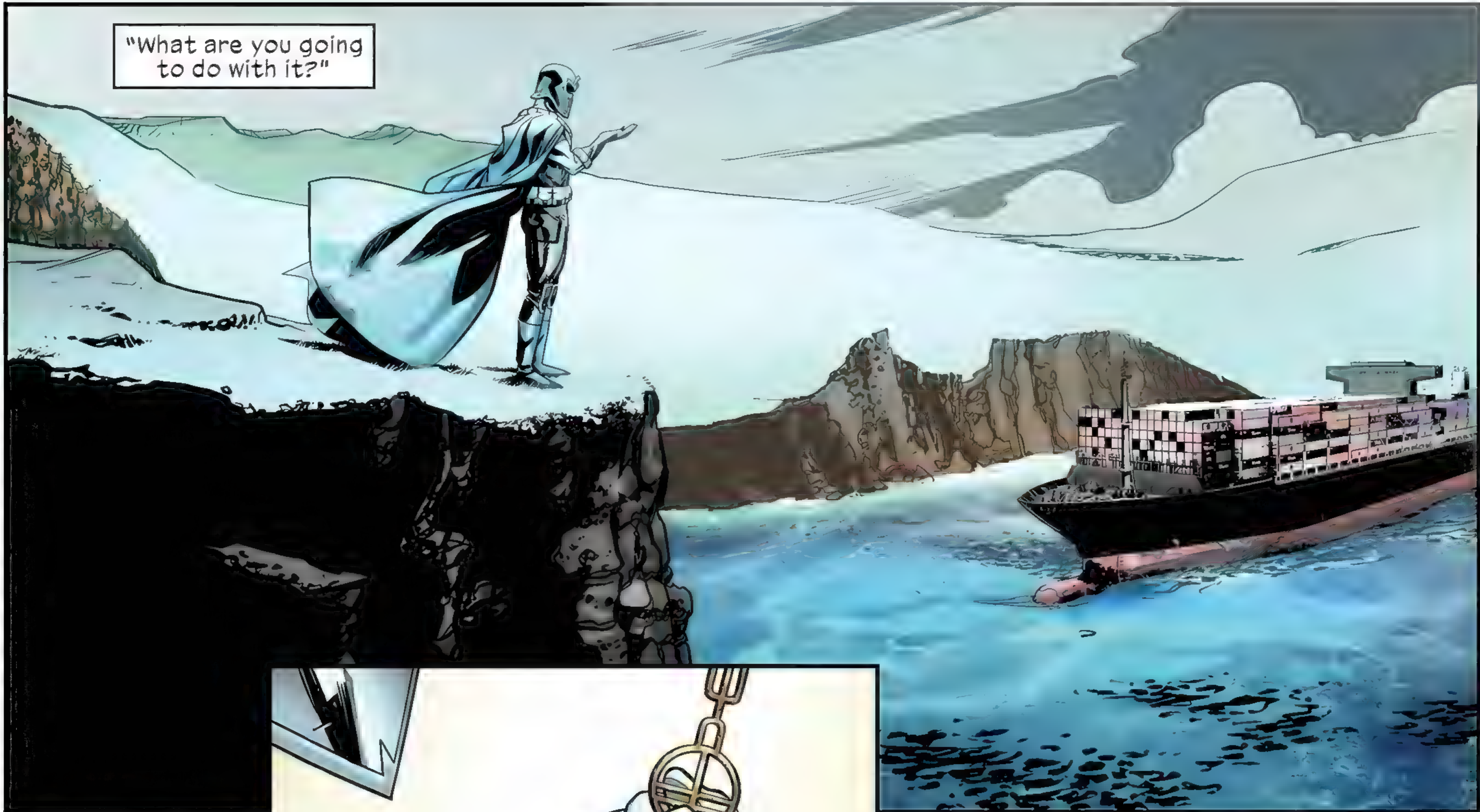




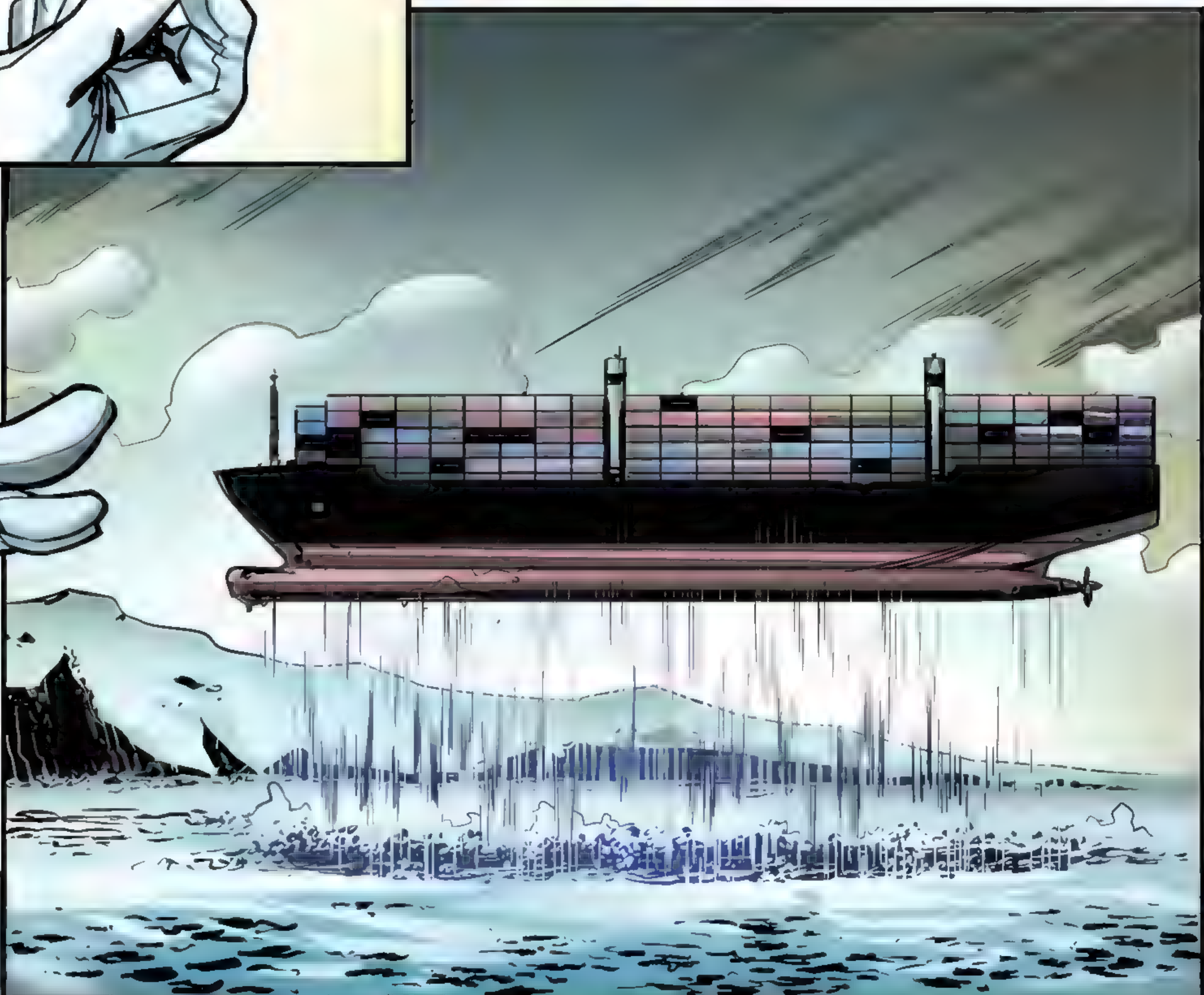
"No. I
do not."



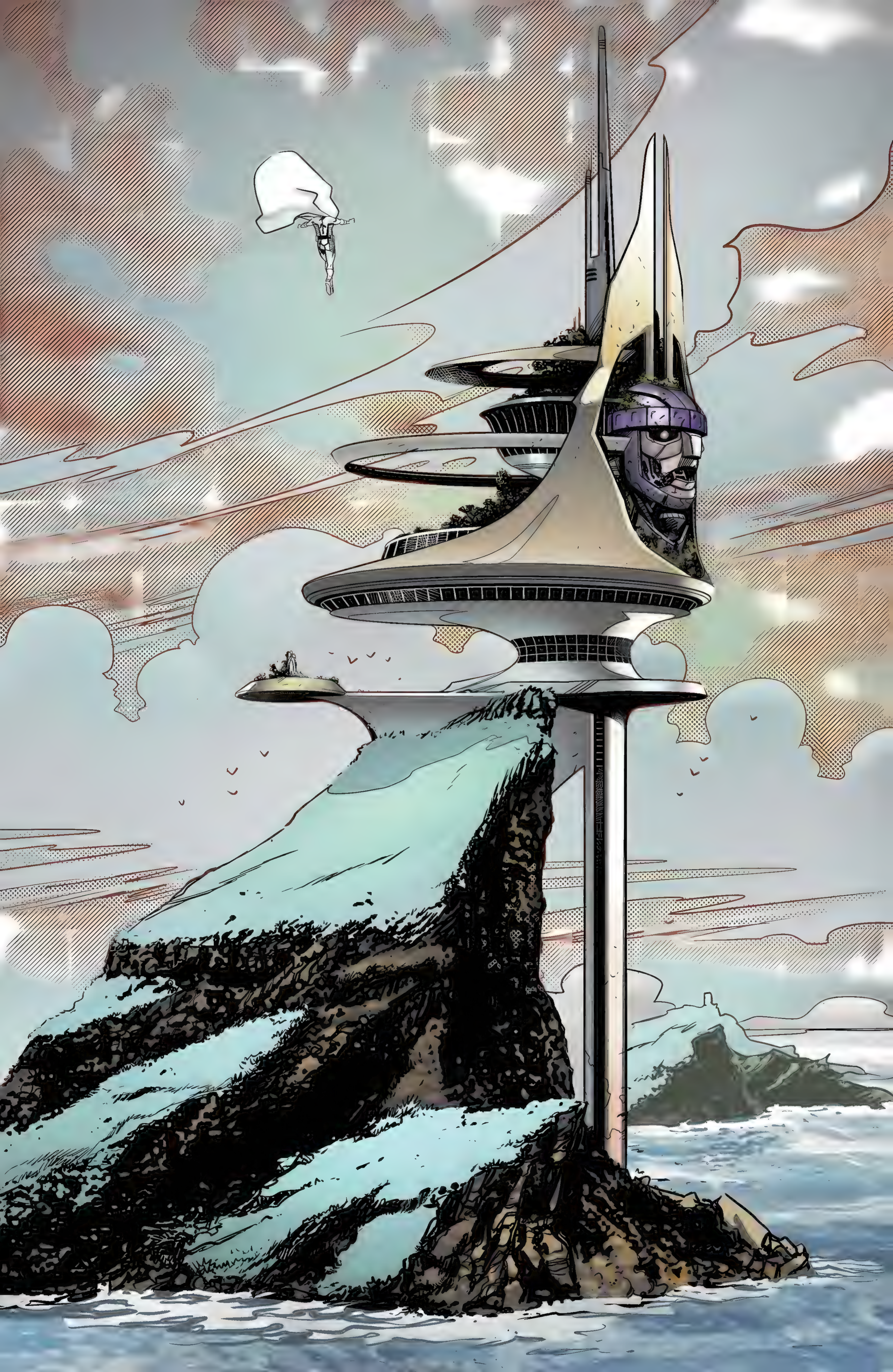
"What are you going to do with it?"



The lady asked for a favor...









Watch
your
step.



Okay...
You
can open your
eyes.



Ah. Yes.

Yes,
this will do
nicely.

I hope it
wasn't too much
trouble.

None
at all,
really.

Namor sends
his regards,
and it turns out he
wasn't especially
attached to
the place.

Apparently,
he won it gambling
with some Danes
after the second
World War.





Well, you have your island, Ms. Frost. What are you going to do with it?

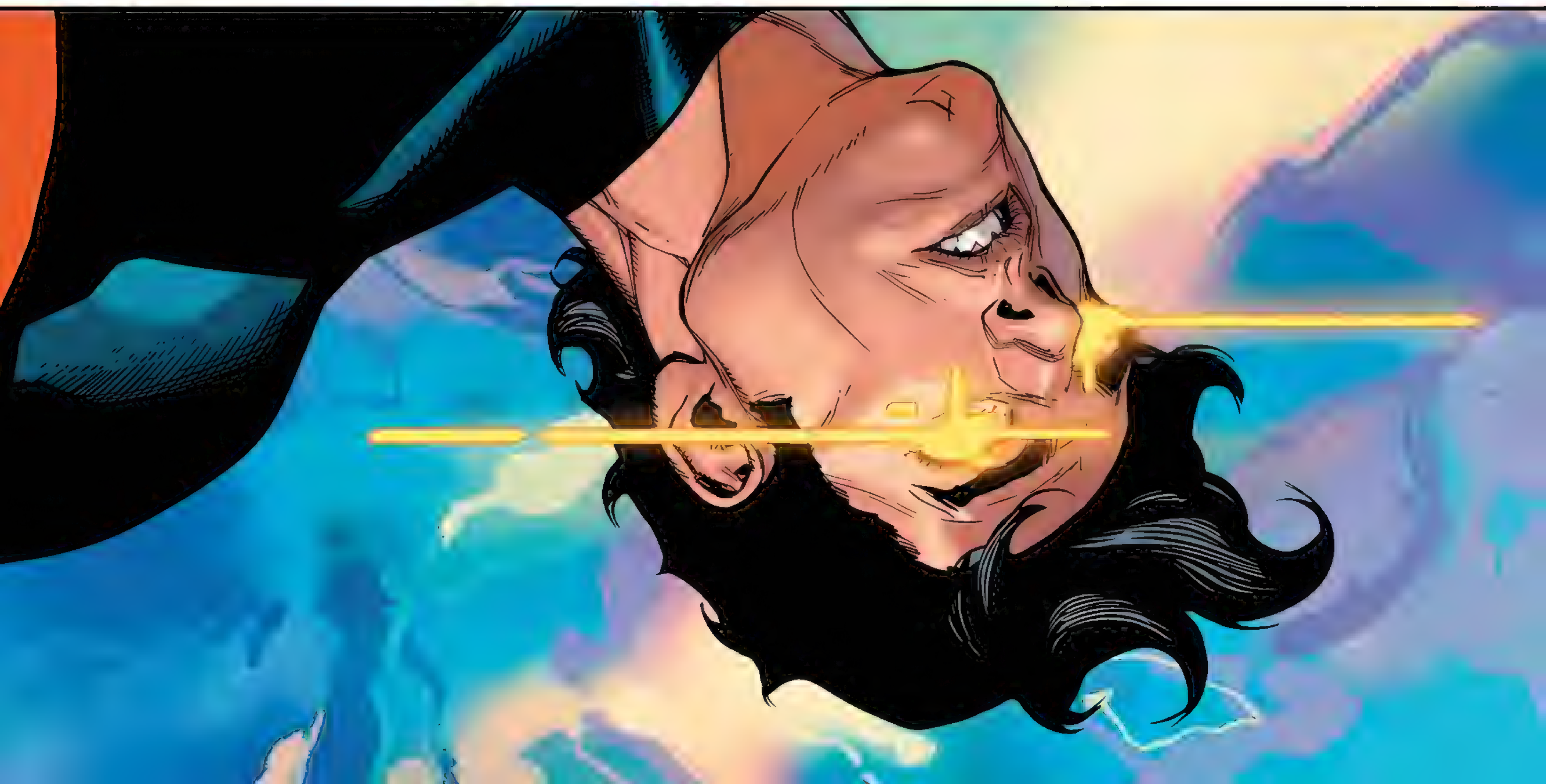
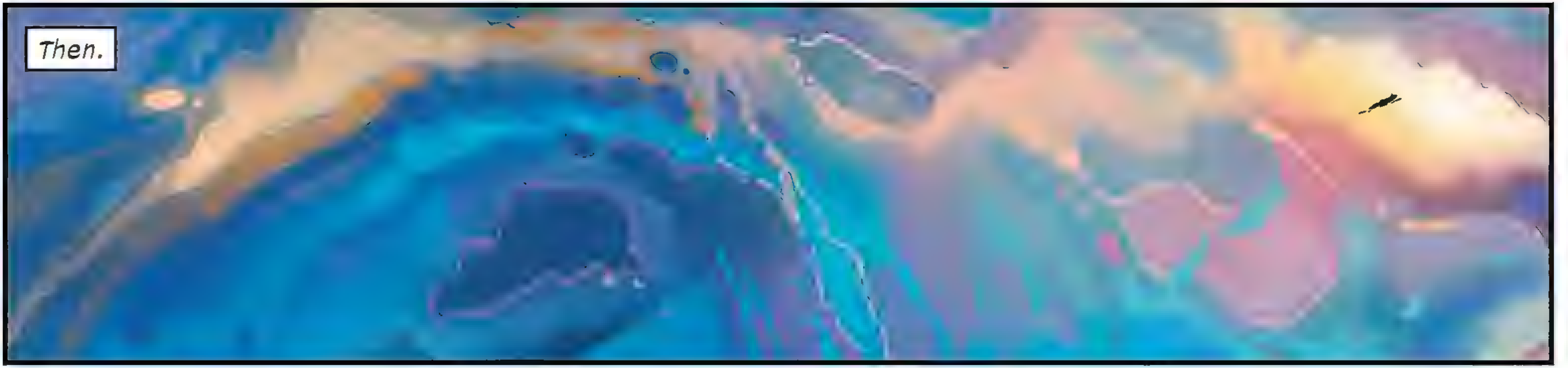
Send invitations, of course...

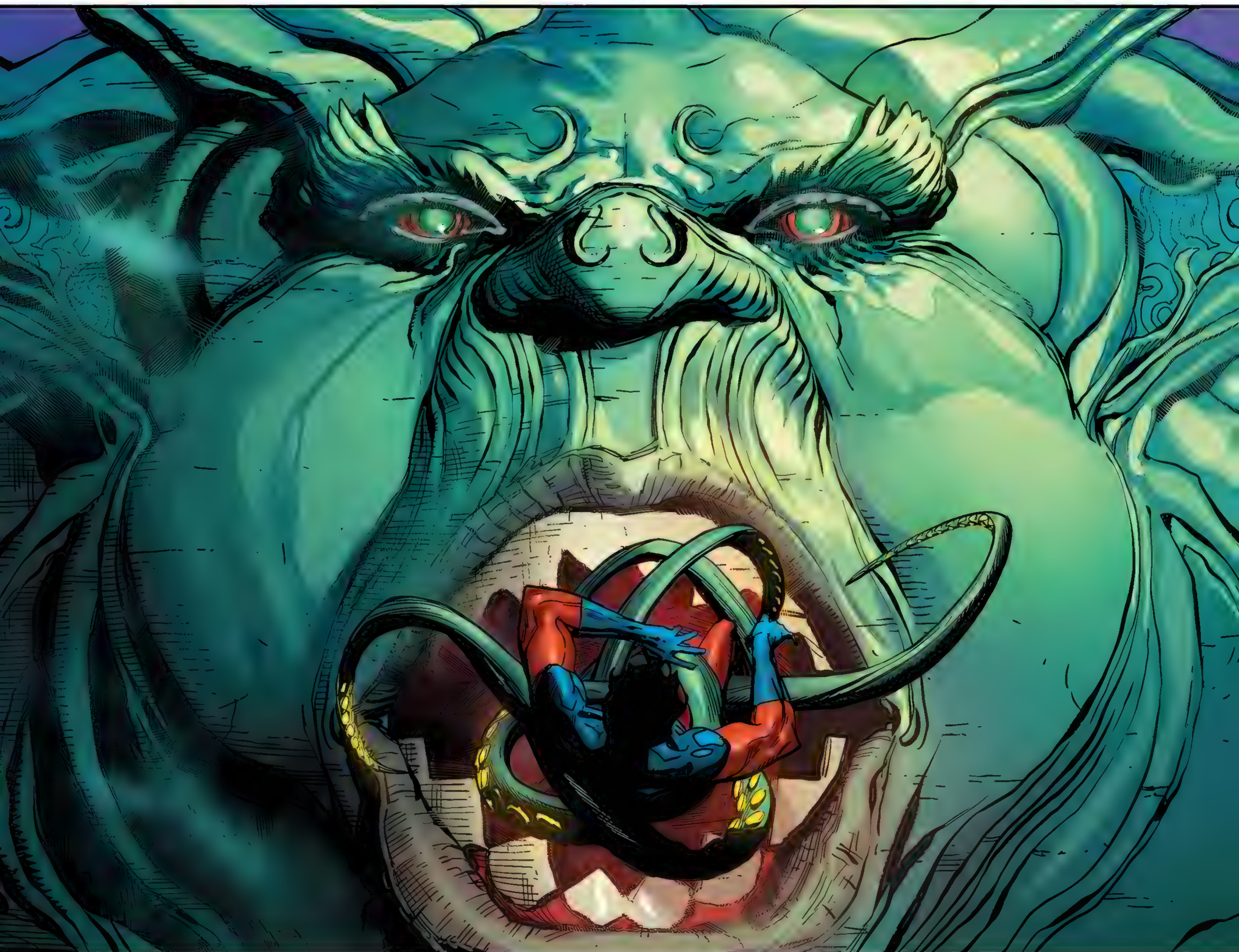
...and then wait to see who shows up.



Fire

13

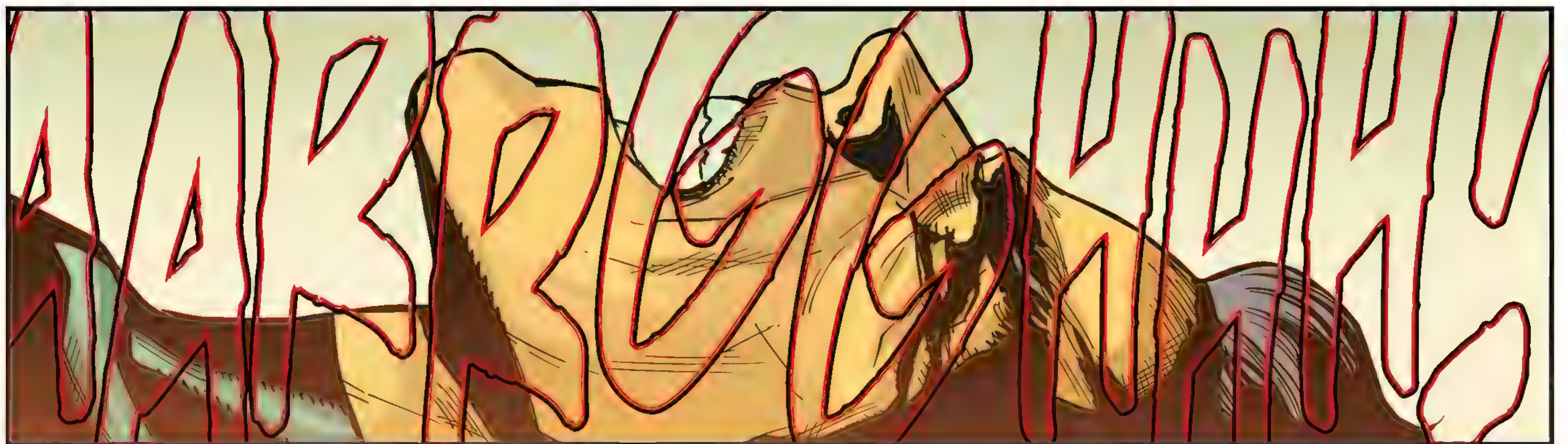




THESE TWO KINGS
AND THEIR EMPIRES
WAGED A WAR THAT
TORE A HOLE--THAT
OPENED A DOOR--
BETWEEN THIS
PLACE AND
THAT.

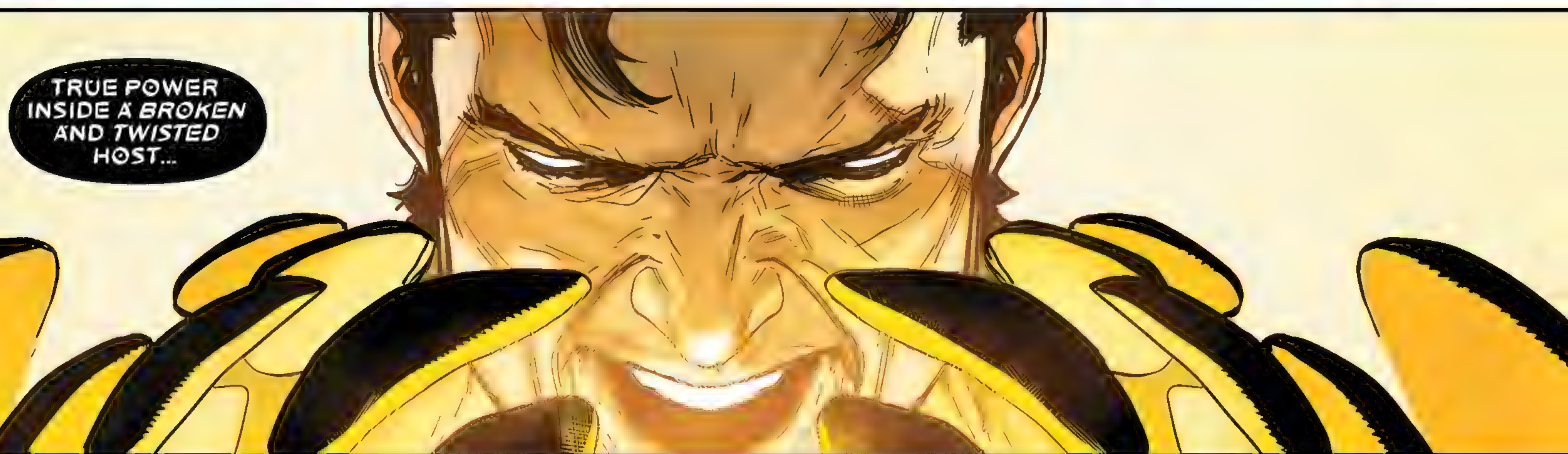


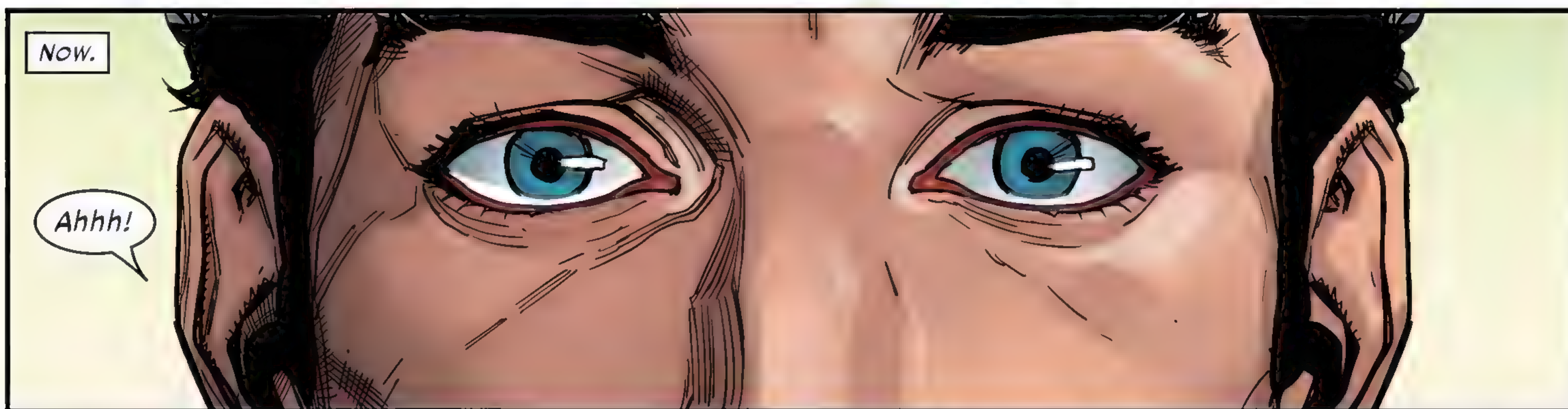
I
WONDER...WHAT'S
A KING WORTH
THERE?
LET'S
SEE, SHALL
WE?

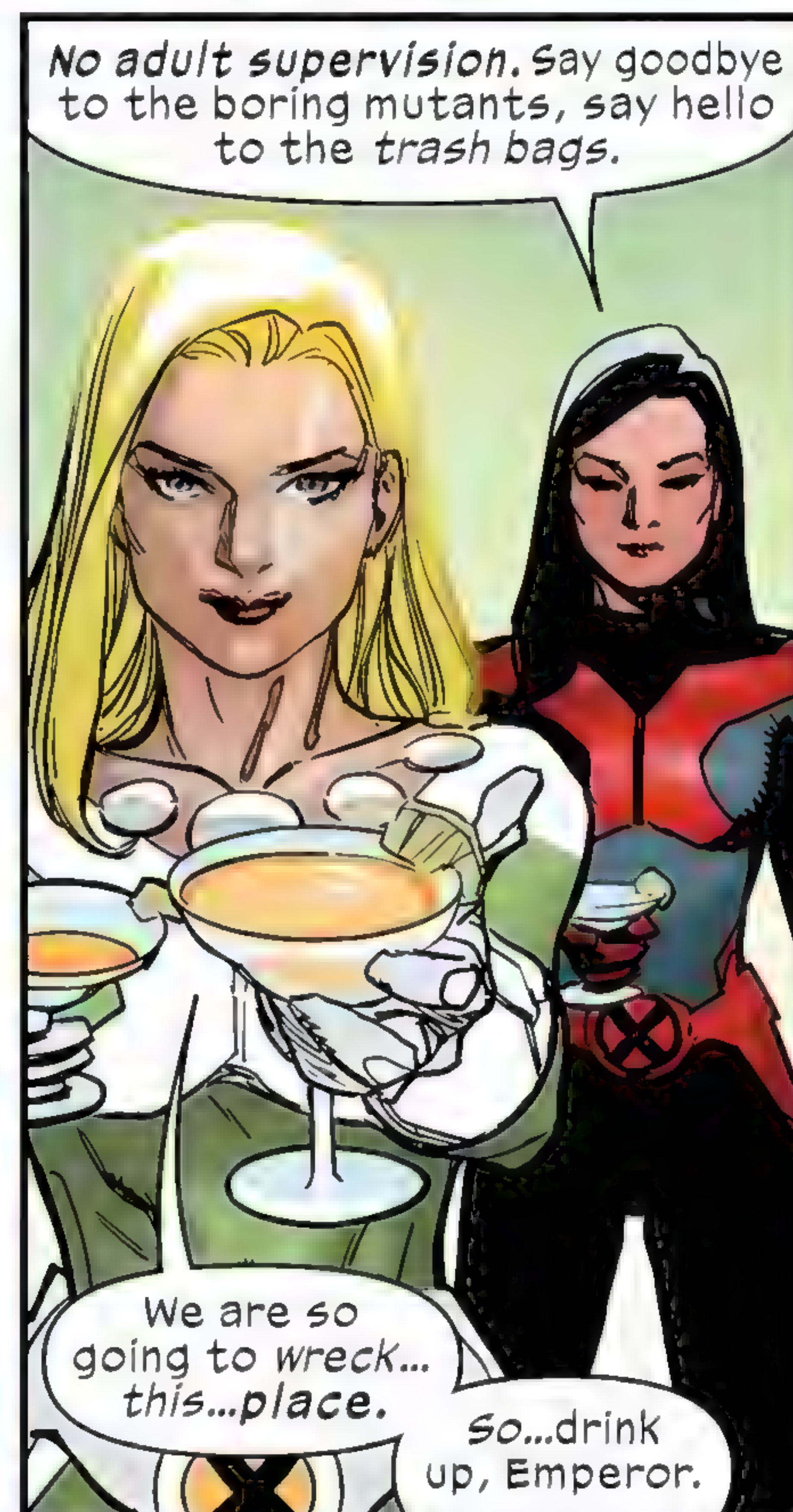
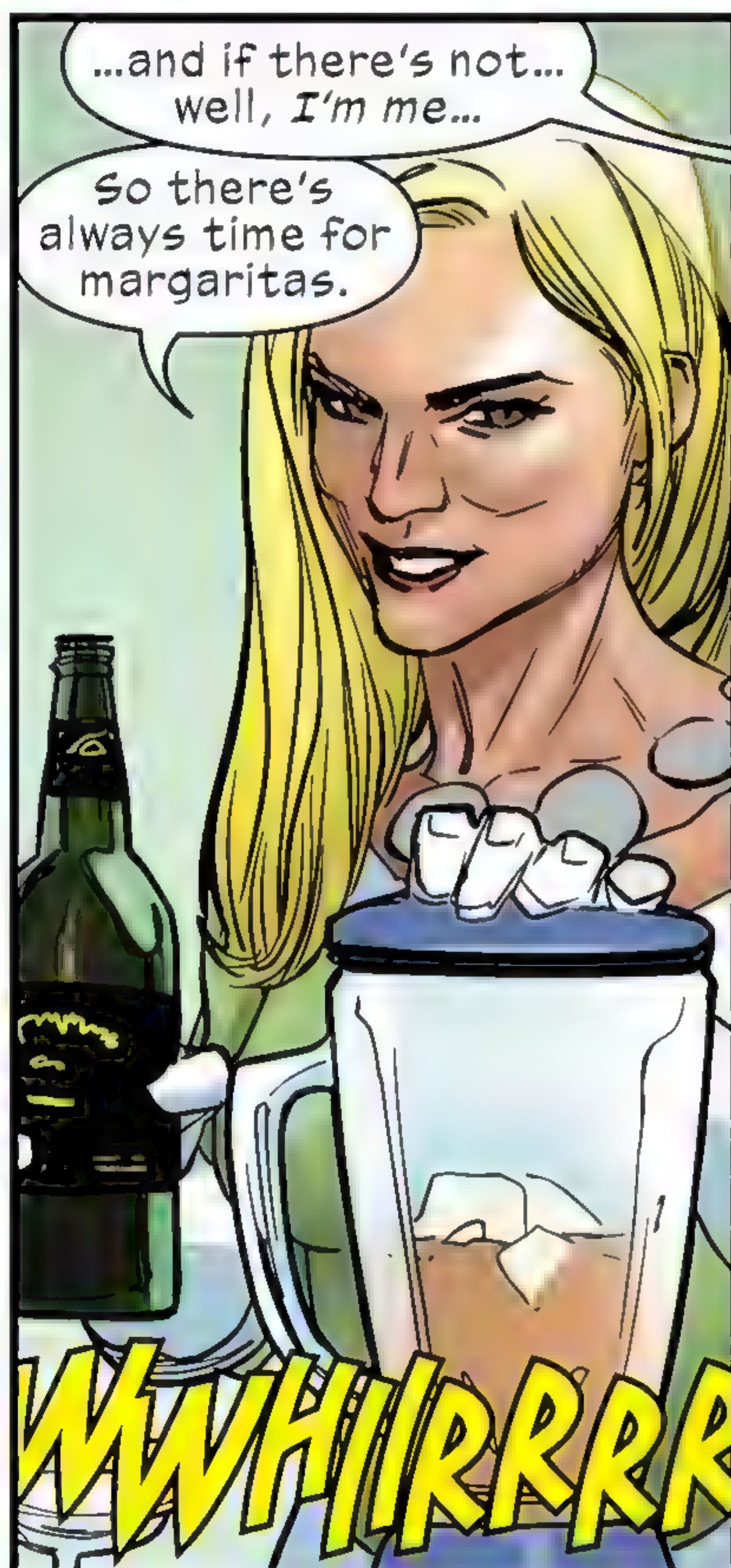


AH...
LOOK AT
THAT.

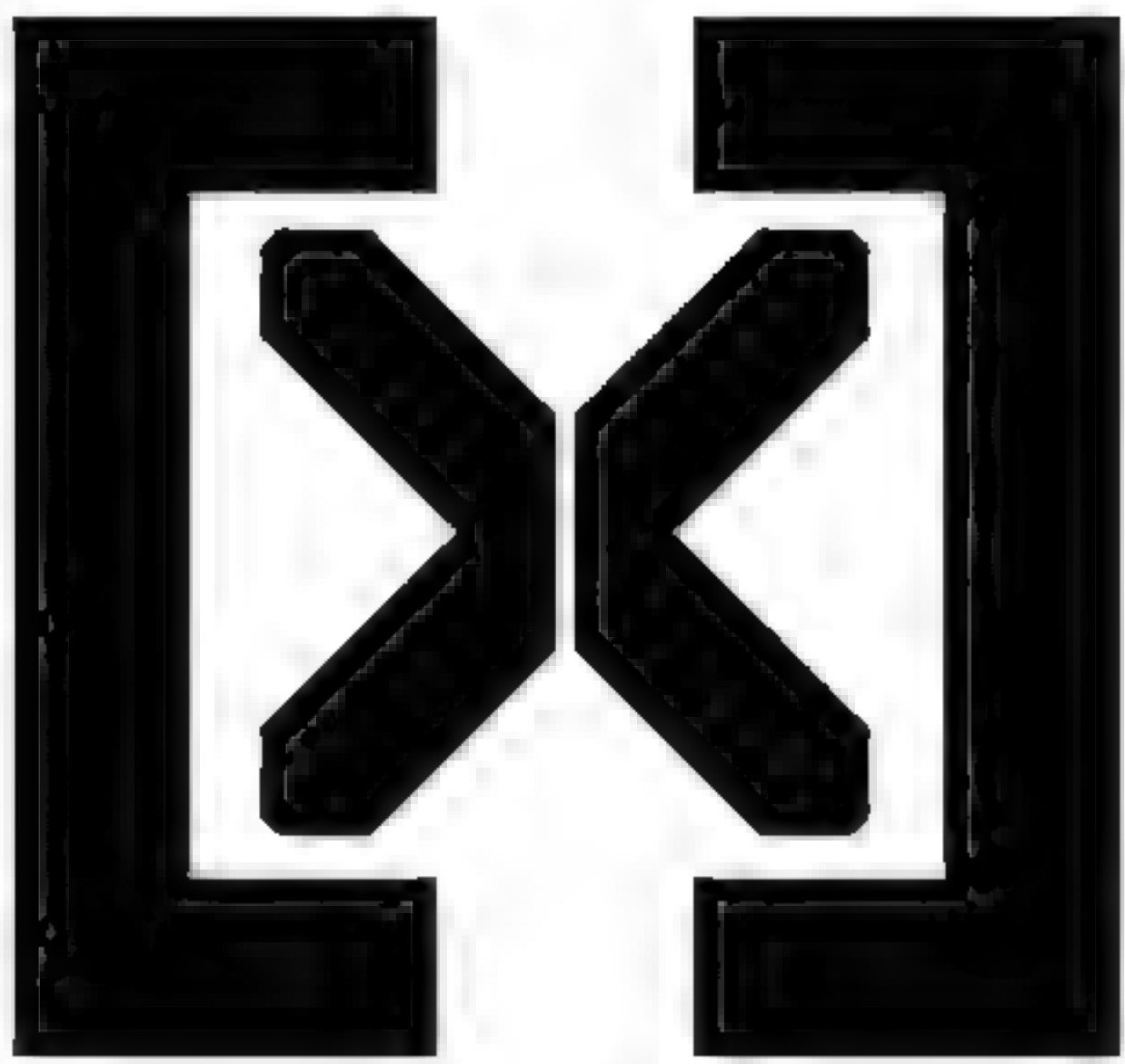












[kra_[0.10]
[koa_[0.10]

[kra_[0.X]
[koa_[0.X]

EMPYRE

The Kree and Skrull empires have united under Emperor Hulkling to fight a common enemy: the Celestial Messiah Quoi and his plant-like Cotati, who have claimed Earth’s Moon as their own!

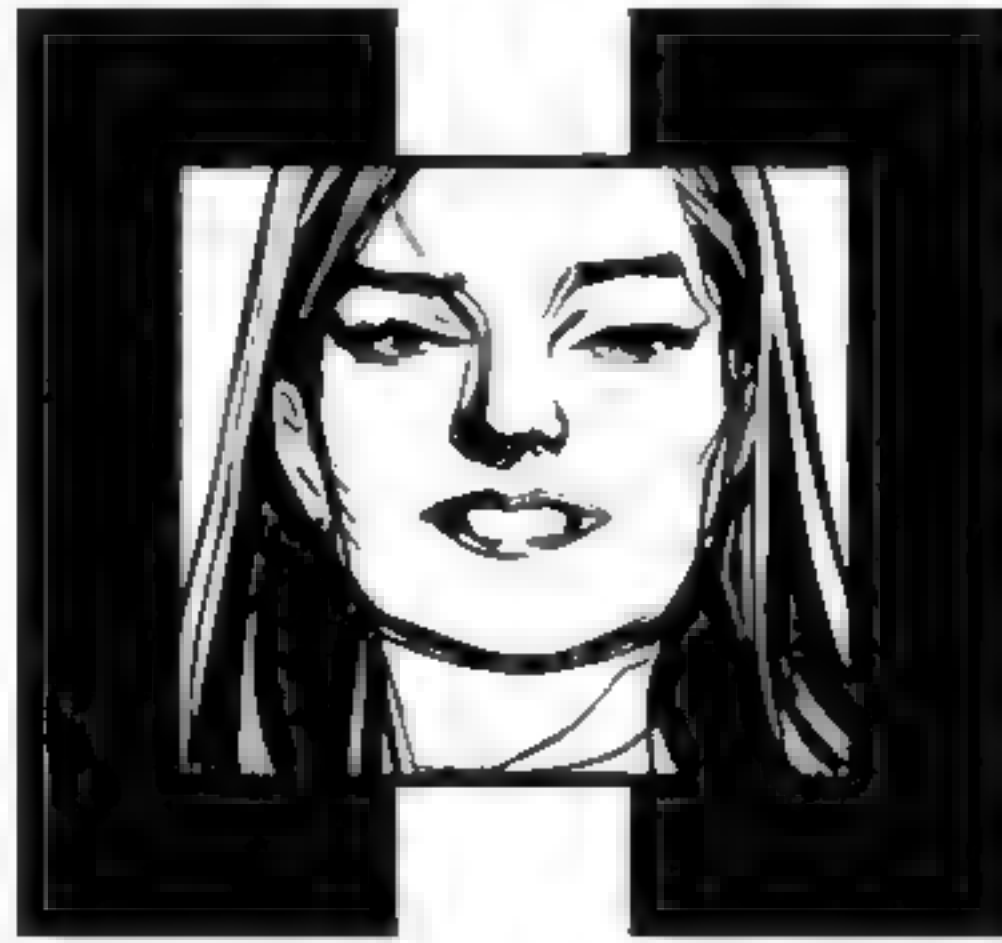
Huh. Who do we know who lives on the Moon?



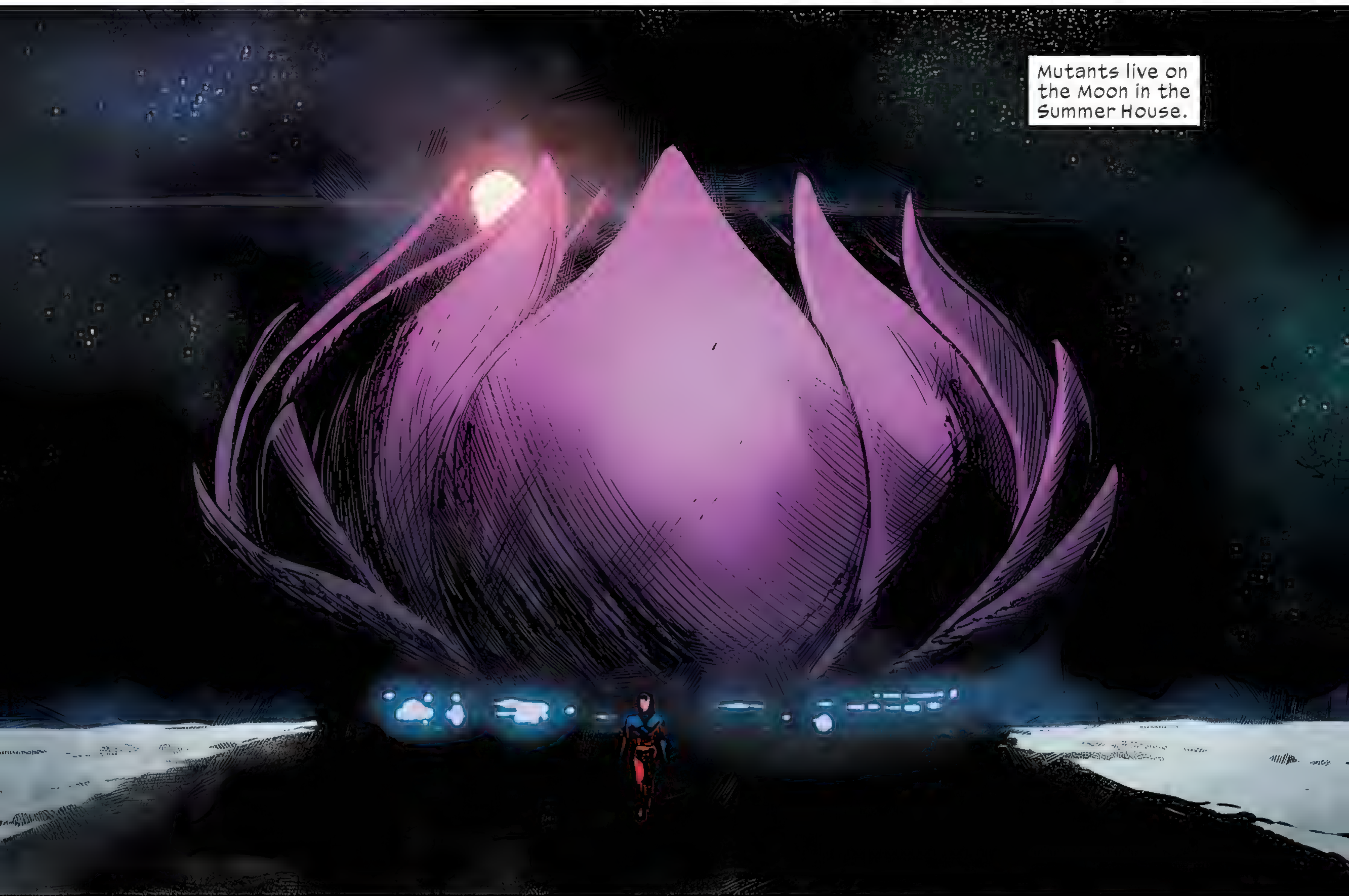
Vulcan



Petra



Sway



Mutants live on the Moon in the Summer House.

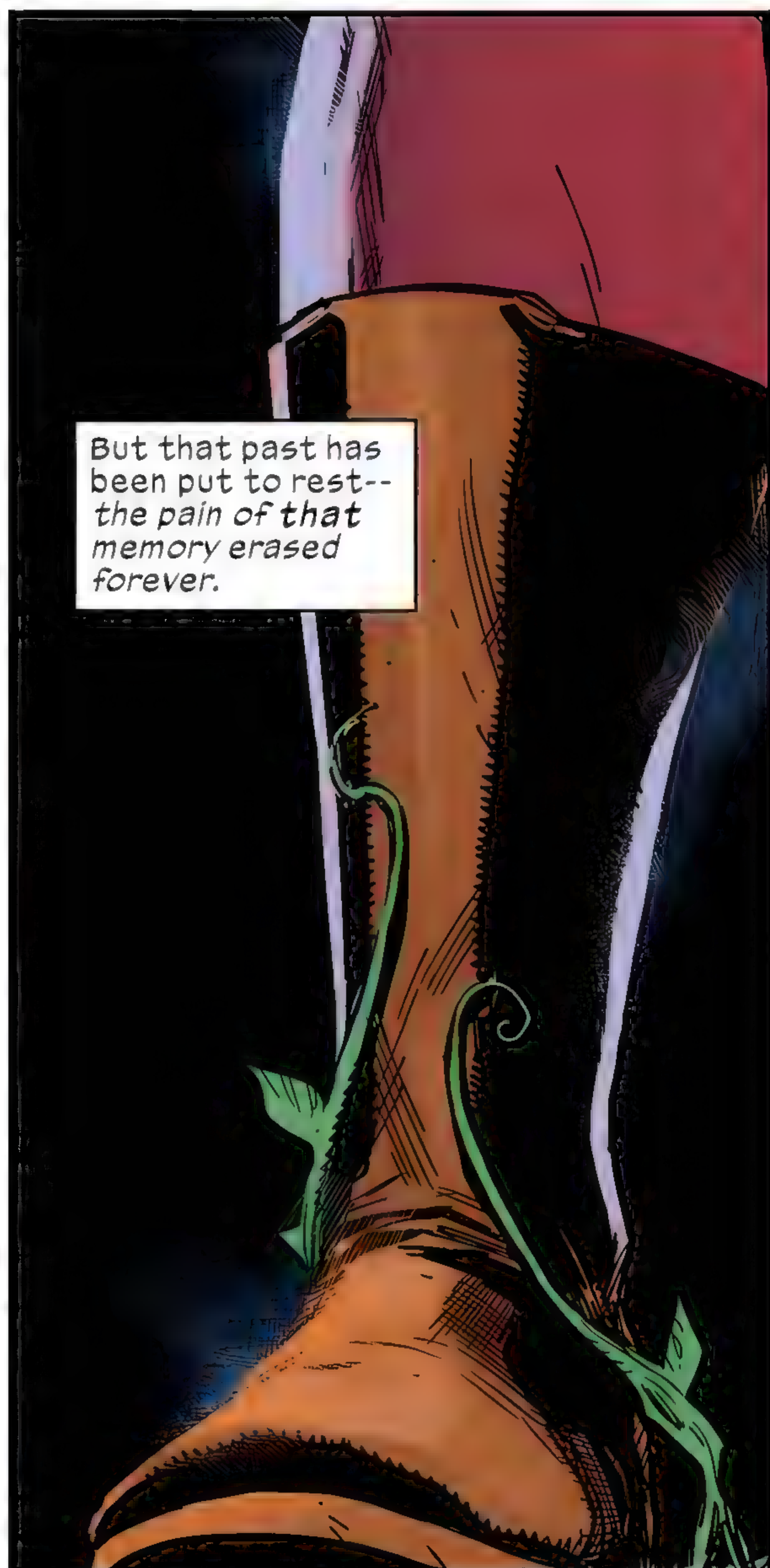


Far from the Sea of Tranquility, nestled in the shadows of the meridian fissure...

It is just one lunar mile from the Blue Area of the Moon and the ruins of an ancient alien civilization.



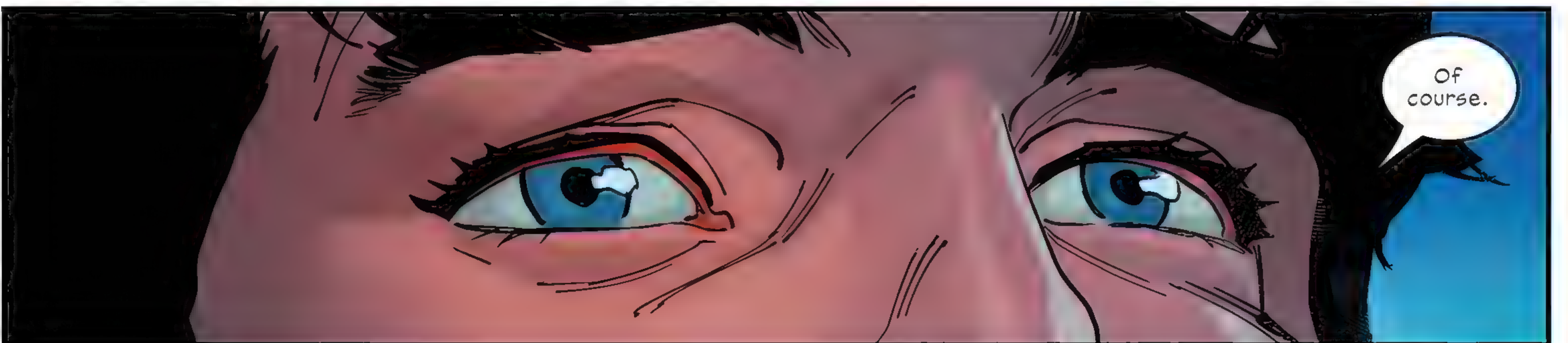
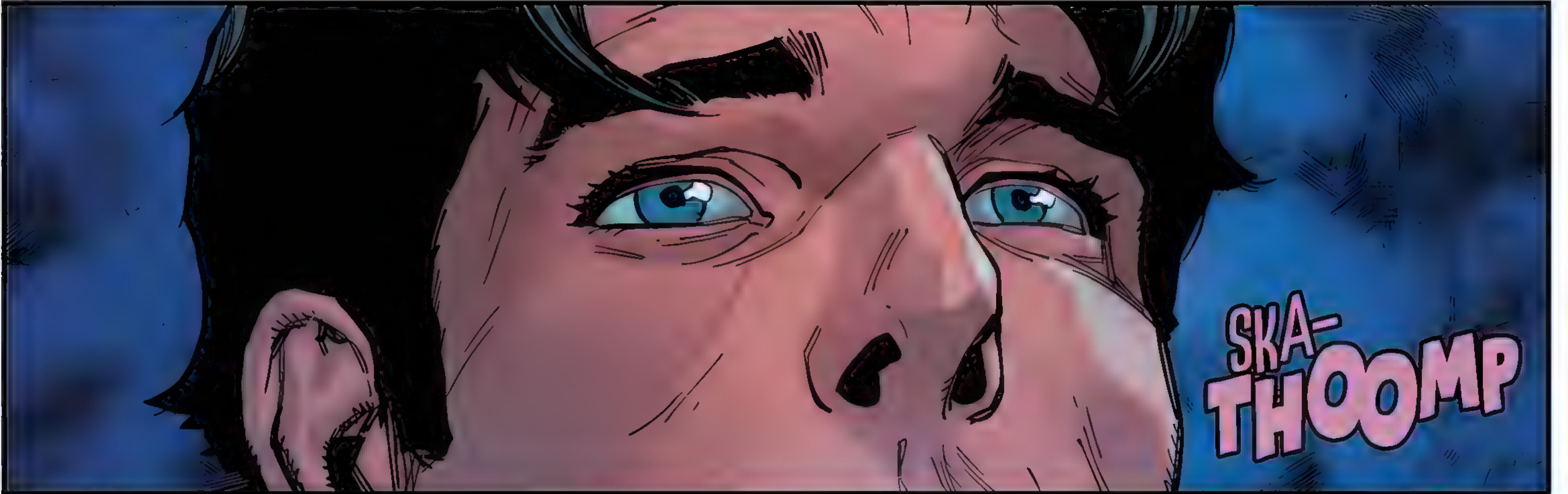
Once it was a place of nightmares for mutants.



But that past has been put to rest--
the pain of that memory erased forever.

Now, something
new has taken
root there.







That's
some feat of
engineering...

I would
know. My mutant
eyes are capable
of seeing great
things...



I am, however, not gifted with
telescopic vision. And God knows
I'm not known for accurately
judging the trajectory
of things...

So I'm going
to assume that
Earth is your...
general target
and that you're
doing your best not
to hit *the island*
my people call
home.

Because that
would be *a mistake*. You're going
to want to *steer clear* of Krakoa.





Saying that,
I feel the need to
tell you...

All this...
violence you're
doing...



It
never ends
well.

Believe
me.



НІСІСІСІСІ
ММІІІІІІ.

Oh,
I know. I
understand where
it comes from. You
look at humanity
and find them
wanting.

You look
at what they're
capable of--and
there's so little good
to balance out all
that evil...



I can see
why you want
to destroy
them.

I really can.



But once
you start down
that road...

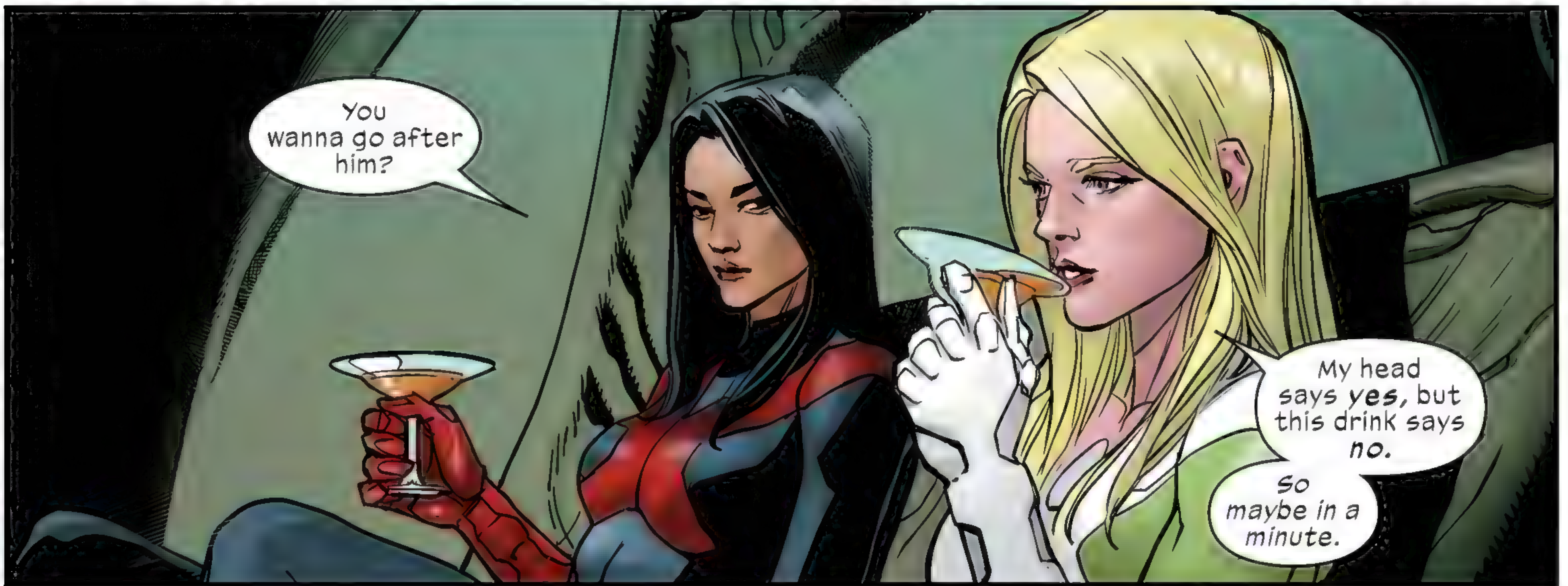
Have you
considered what that
makes you?



Here you go. Round three.

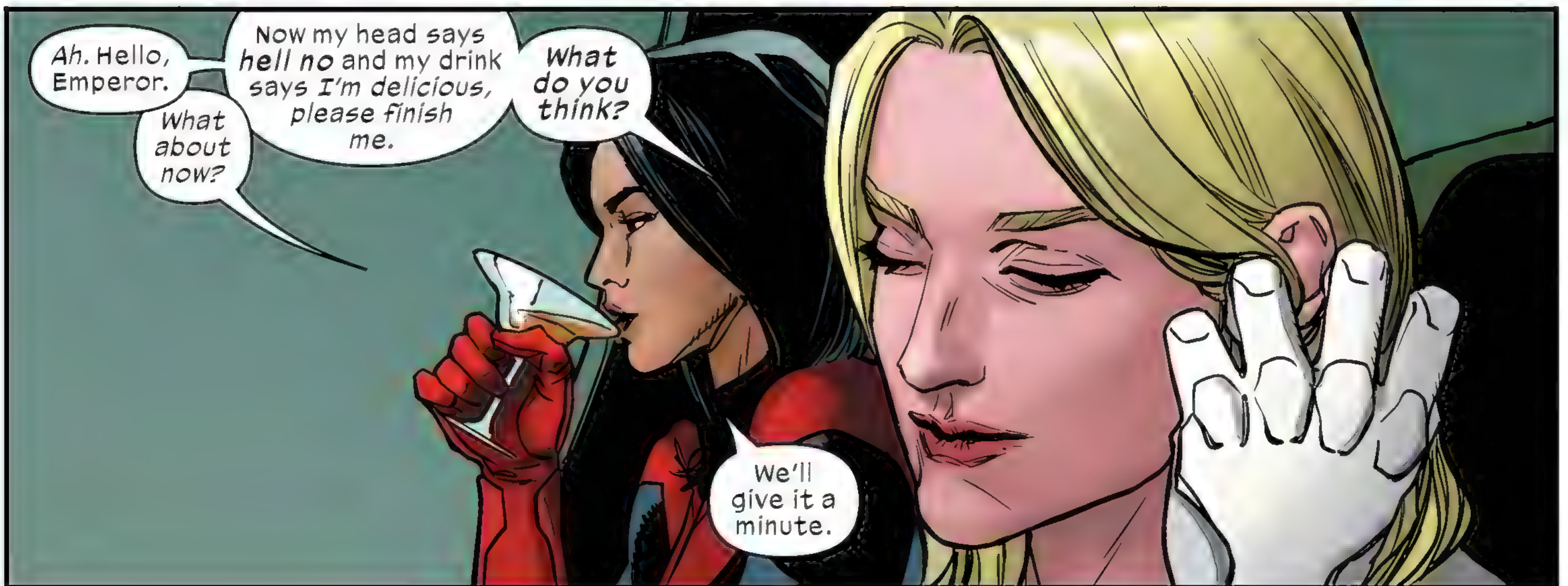
Any sign of him?

He went in that general direction...and nope. Not a peep.



You wanna go after him?

My head says *yes*, but this drink says *no*.
So maybe in a minute.



Ah. Hello, Emperor.

What about now?

Now my head says *hell no* and my drink says I'm delicious, please finish me.

What do you think?

We'll give it a minute.



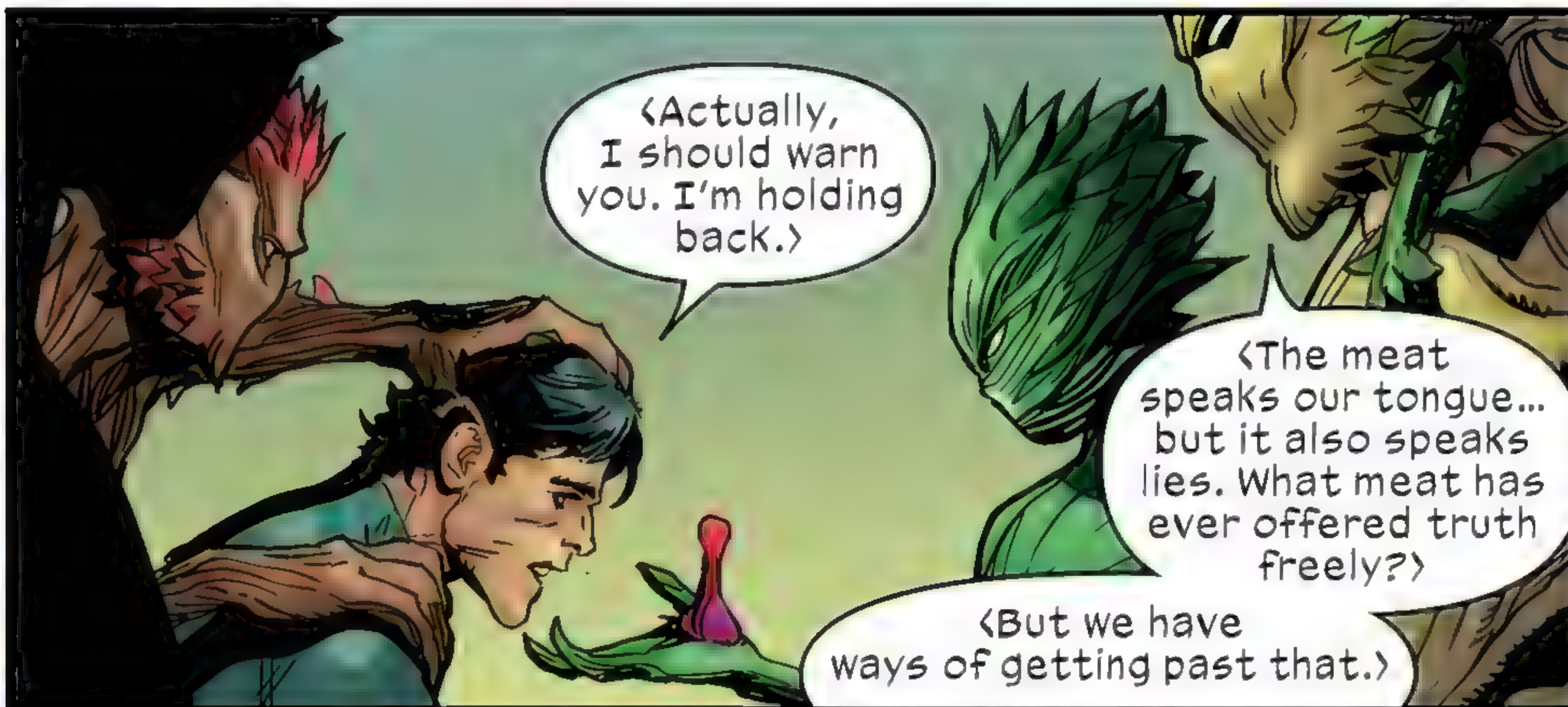
«We've subdued him...but at great cost.»

«This one fights like a wounded beast.»



«Let them fight all they want. Let them build their buildings and mine the earth-- the jungle always returns.»

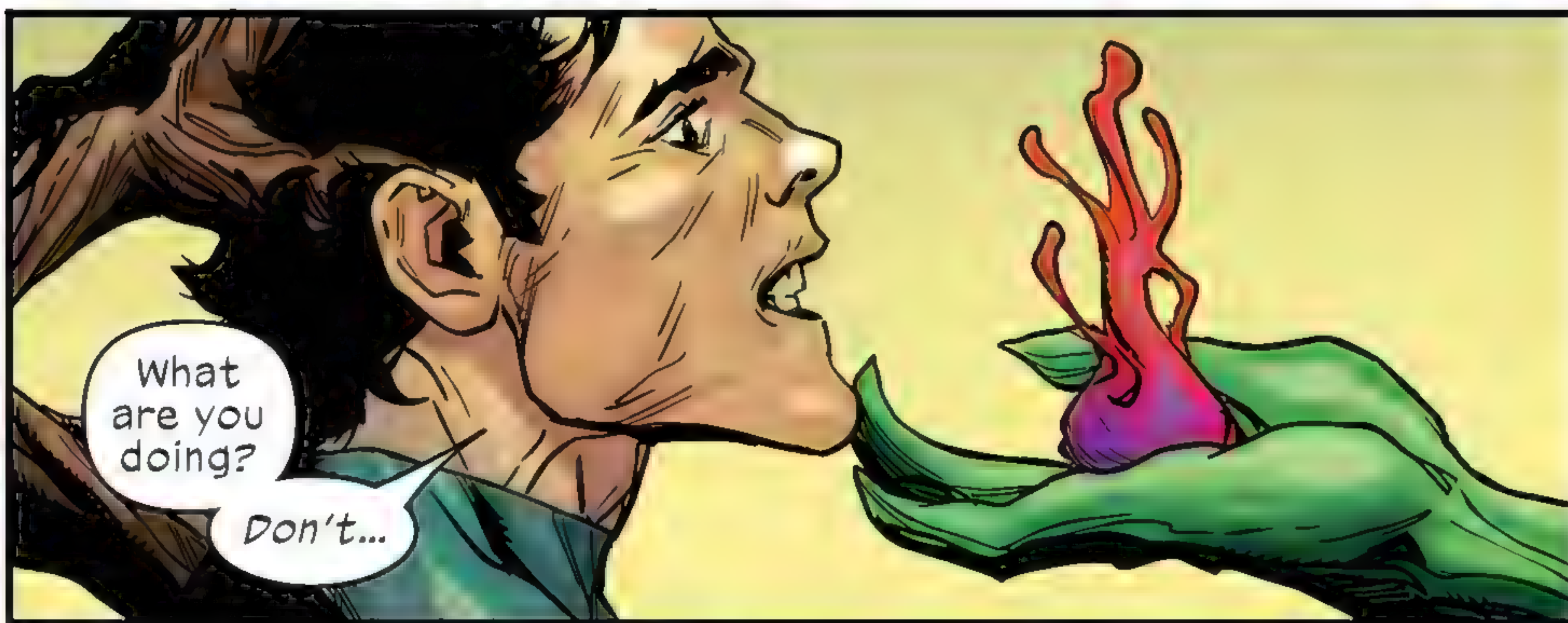
«And the flesh is always weak.»



«Actually, I should warn you. I'm holding back.»

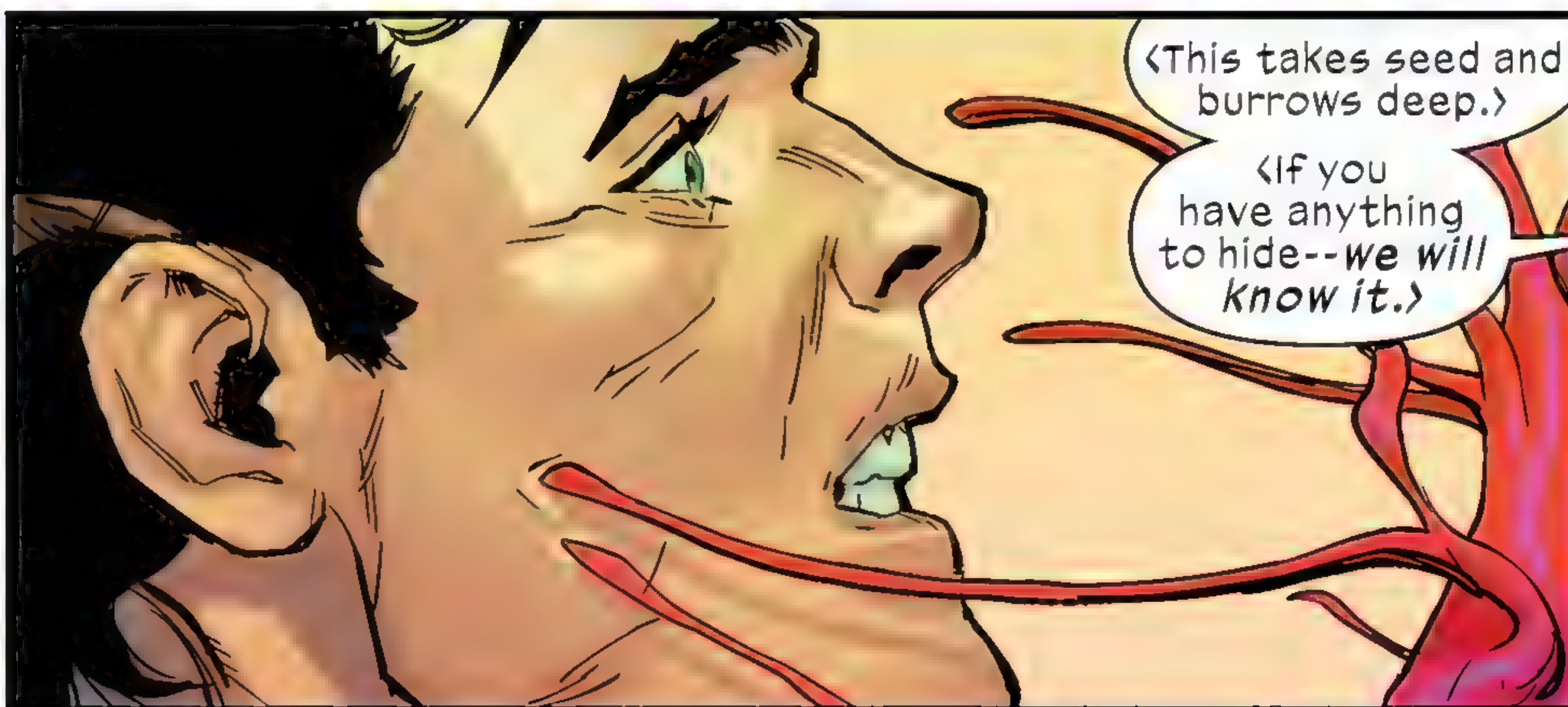
«The meat speaks our tongue... but it also speaks lies. What meat has ever offered truth freely?»

«But we have ways of getting past that.»



What are you doing?

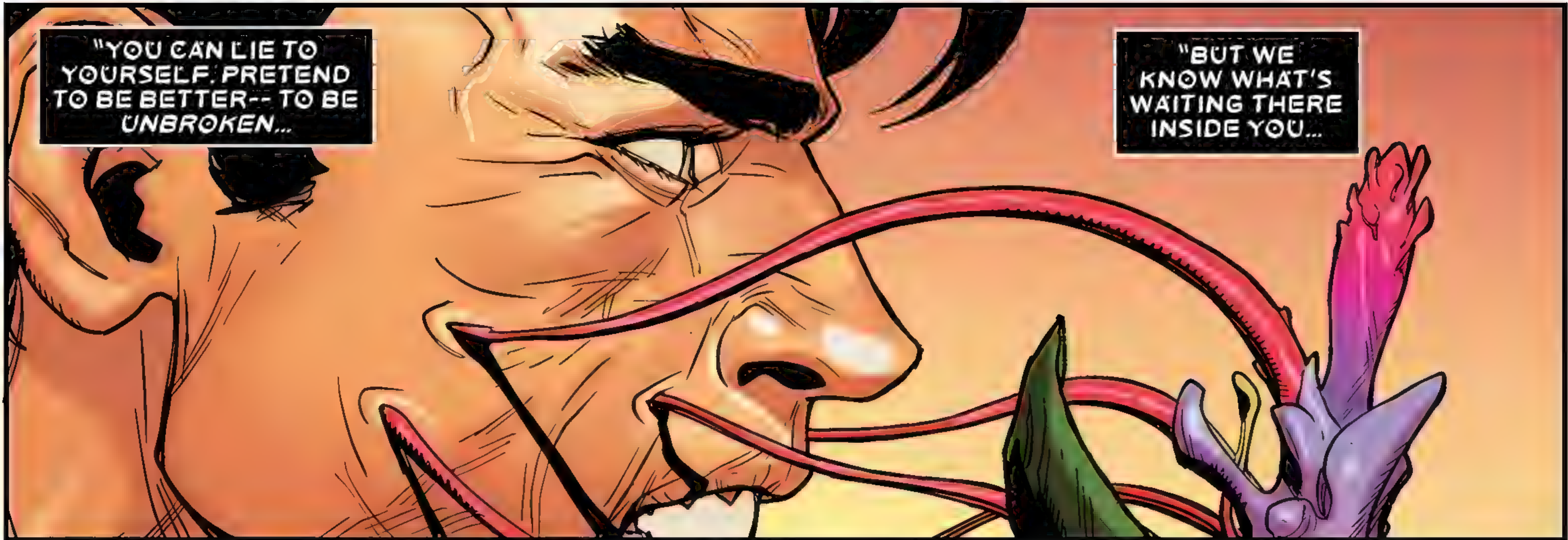
Don't...



«This takes seed and burrows deep.»

«If you have anything to hide--we will know it.»





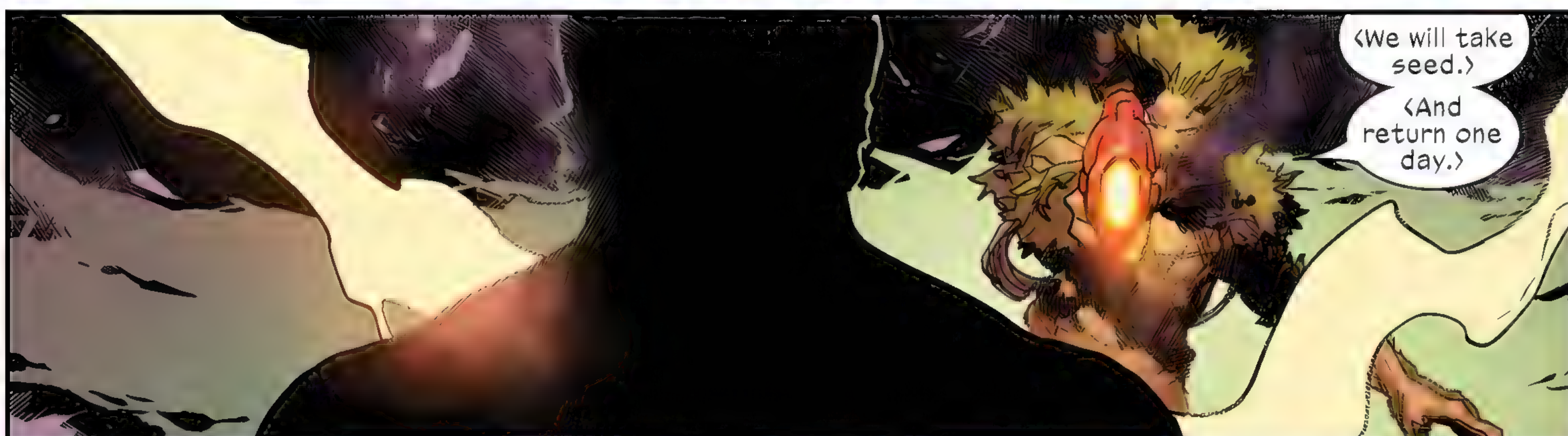
"YOU CAN LIE TO
YOURSELF. PRETEND
TO BE BETTER-- TO BE
UNBROKEN..."

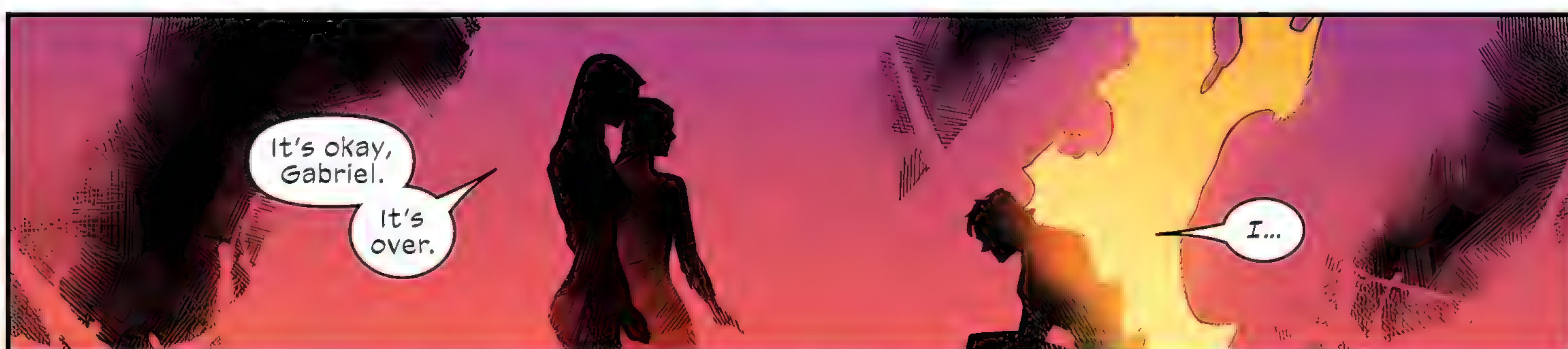
"BUT WE
KNOW WHAT'S
WAITING THERE
INSIDE YOU..."



"WAITING TO
GET OUT."









Jean and I are taking the kids to Chandilore for the day. I know we've talked about you getting out and not just staying at the house, and I really think you should reconsider it.

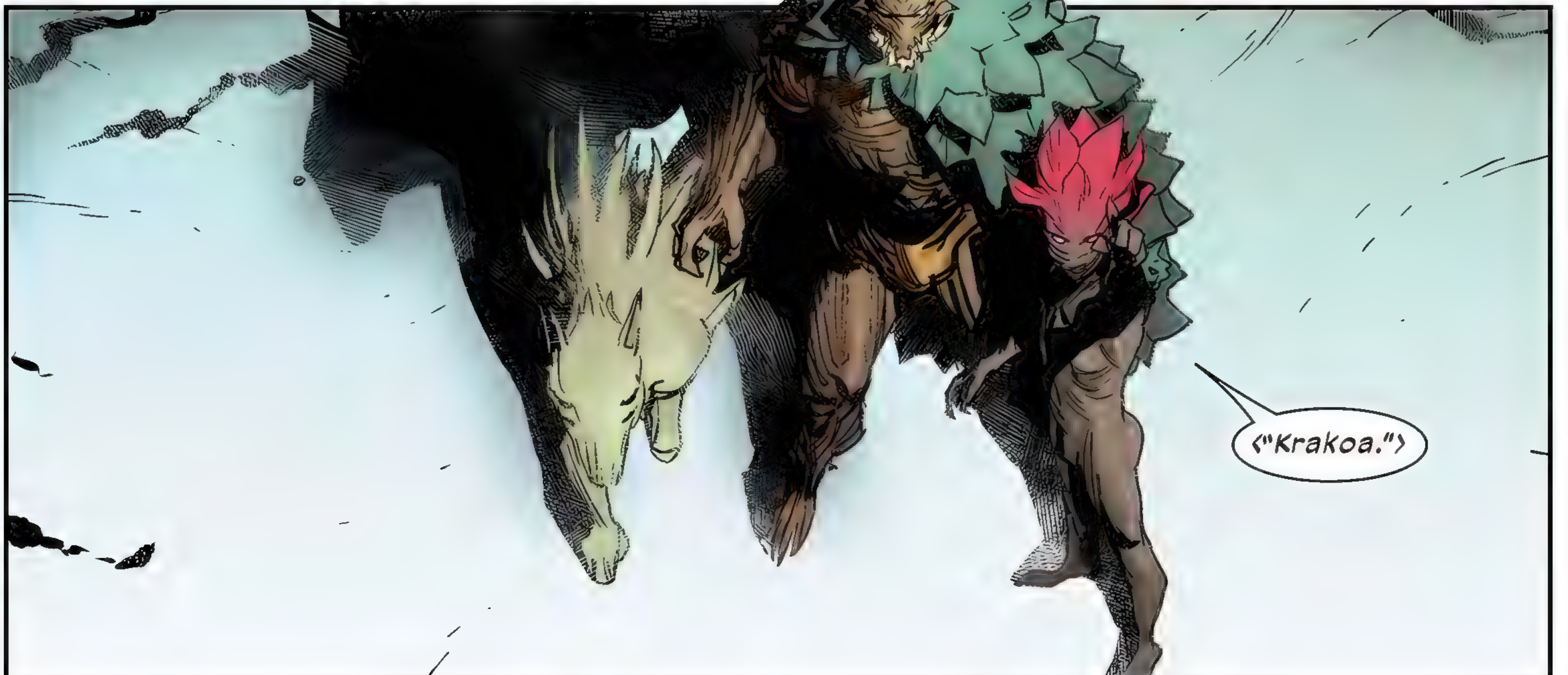
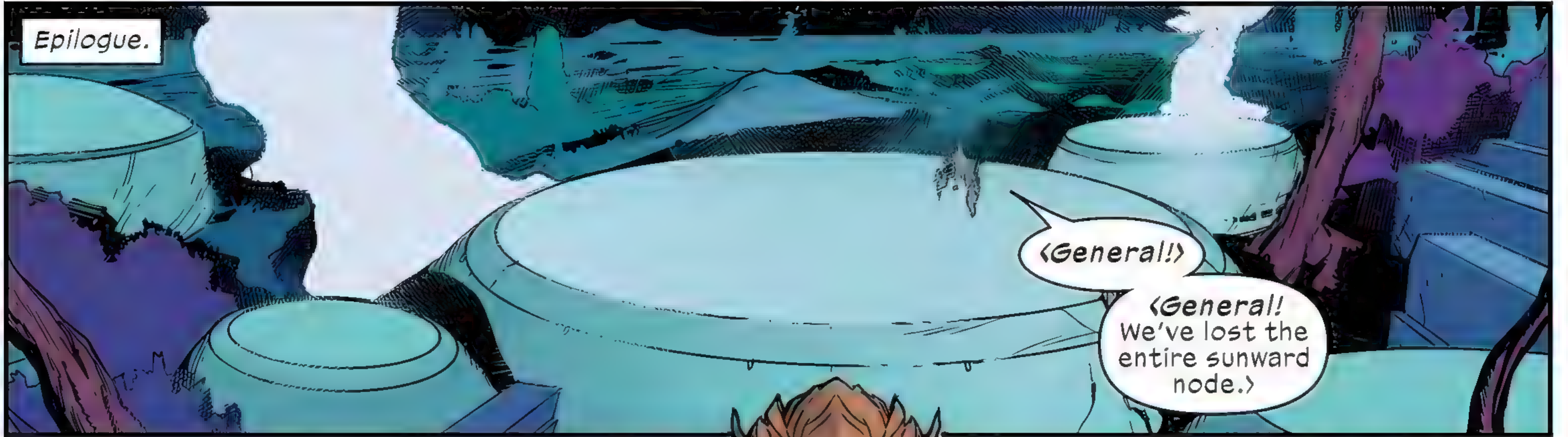
I know coming back here to Shi'ar space was out of the question-- maybe it shouldn't be--but doing the same thing over and over, each and every day, makes it hard to become someone new. I know that deep down that's what you want.

And, hey, I promise I'll be with you the whole way. Come fire, come war, come anything that would stand in the way. You're safe, because you're with family.

We'll probably be home after dinner.

*Love,
Scott.*

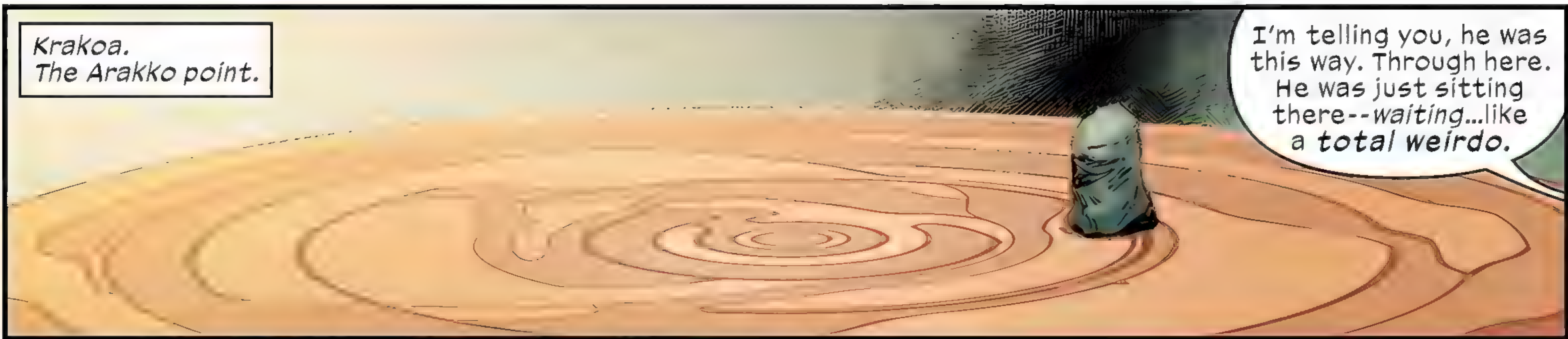






One War, One Mutant

14



Krakoa.
The Arakko point.

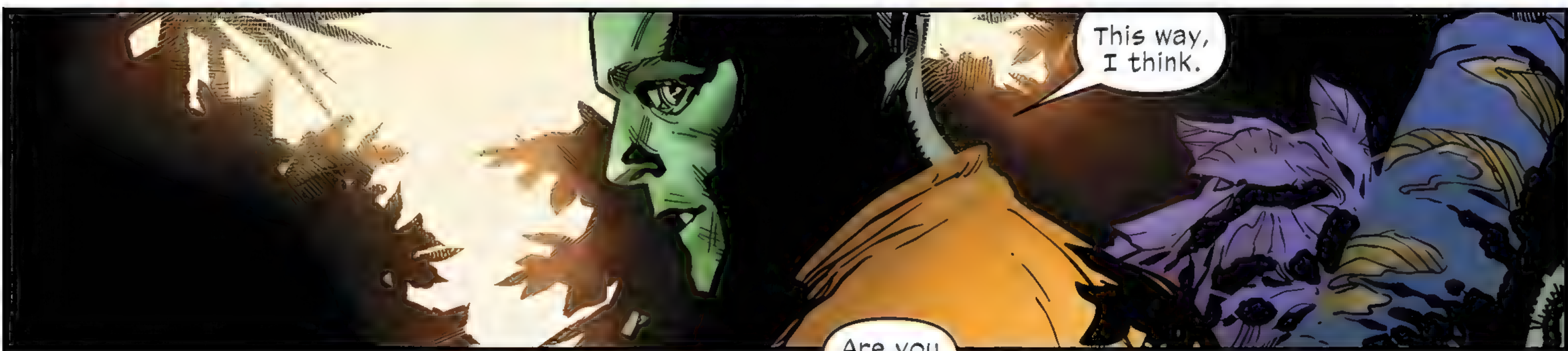
I'm telling you, he was
this way. Through here.
He was just sitting
there--waiting...like
a *total weirdo*.



I thought we weren't
supposed to talk
to him?

Nobody said
that. It was more
like "be careful"...yes,
he's a mutant, but
he's not from here.

He's not
like us.



This way,
I think.

Are you
sure?



I dunno. Maybe. I did see
him. He smiled like he
knew I was there even
though I was hiding--
he was surrounded
by his creepy
little--

Okay.
See?



"Just like
I said. *Total
weirdo.*"

Hello,
friends.



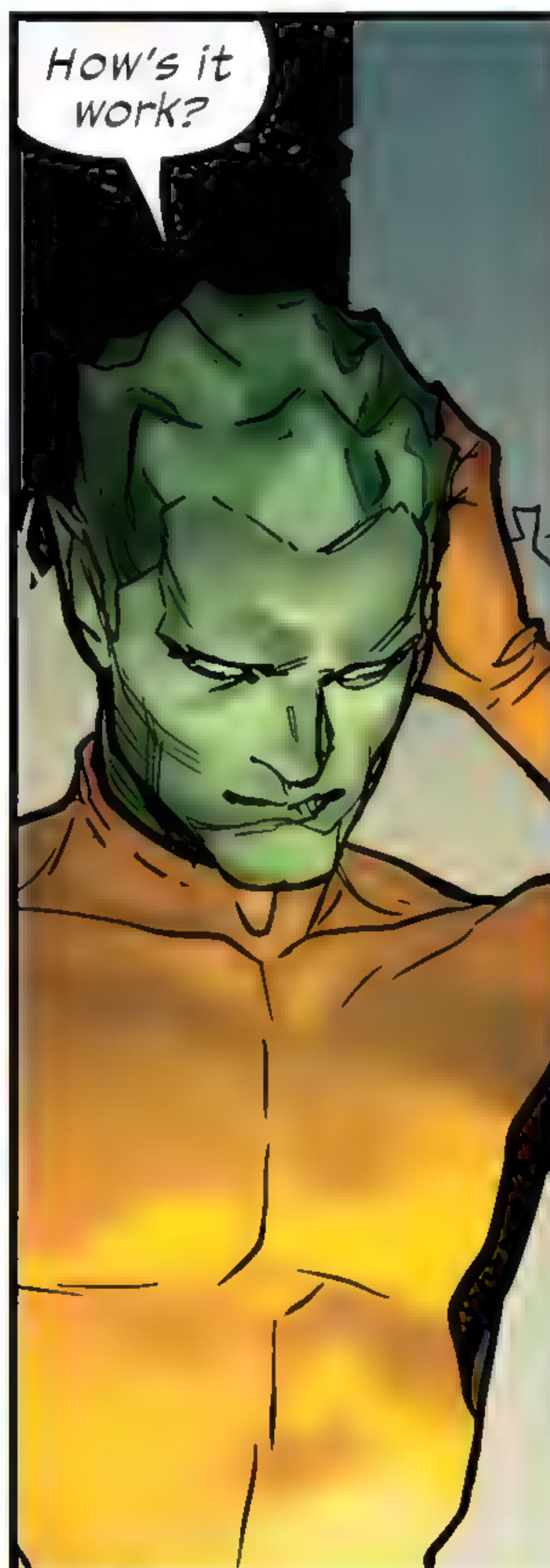
So what are you doing here? Meditating, or... Heeeeey...

Is that a game? It looks like a game.



It *is* a game. A game of Arakko. I learned to play it as a child, but it's certainly not just a game for children.

I've played it many, many times.



How's it work?



That depends on the player, actually. Each game is adaptive--it *changes*. You can play with one player--as I was getting ready to--but it's better with two.

What's it called?



arakko

It's an Arakki word. The name doesn't translate cleanly... I suppose the closest thing is "trial," or maybe "test" would be better.

It's a game about discovering the soft places inside both you and the person you're playing against. How to defend. How to attack.

It's a game about *weakness*.



What if you don't have any?



Yes.
That's how it
starts.



Would you
like to play,
friend?

It's okay
to refuse.
Many do.

...
I'll
play.



Excellent. But
one word of
caution.

Once the
game begins,
we do not
stop until
it ends.

I've
missed many
a meal this
way.



Sure.
Okay.

How
do we
start?

Choose
a piece...



Whoa.

That's...
different.



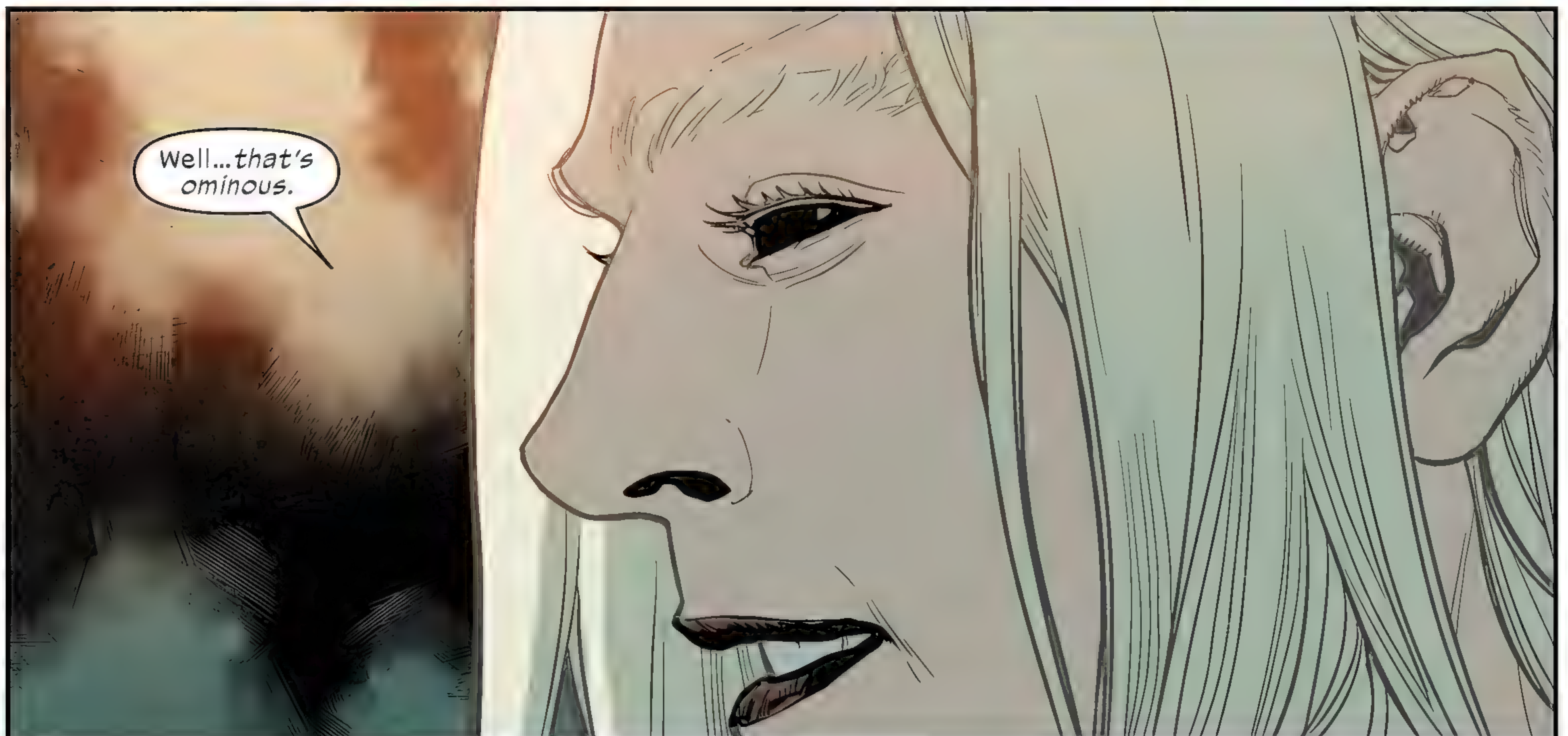
...Then place your piece anywhere
on the board. As with life, where
you begin has little to do with
where you will end.

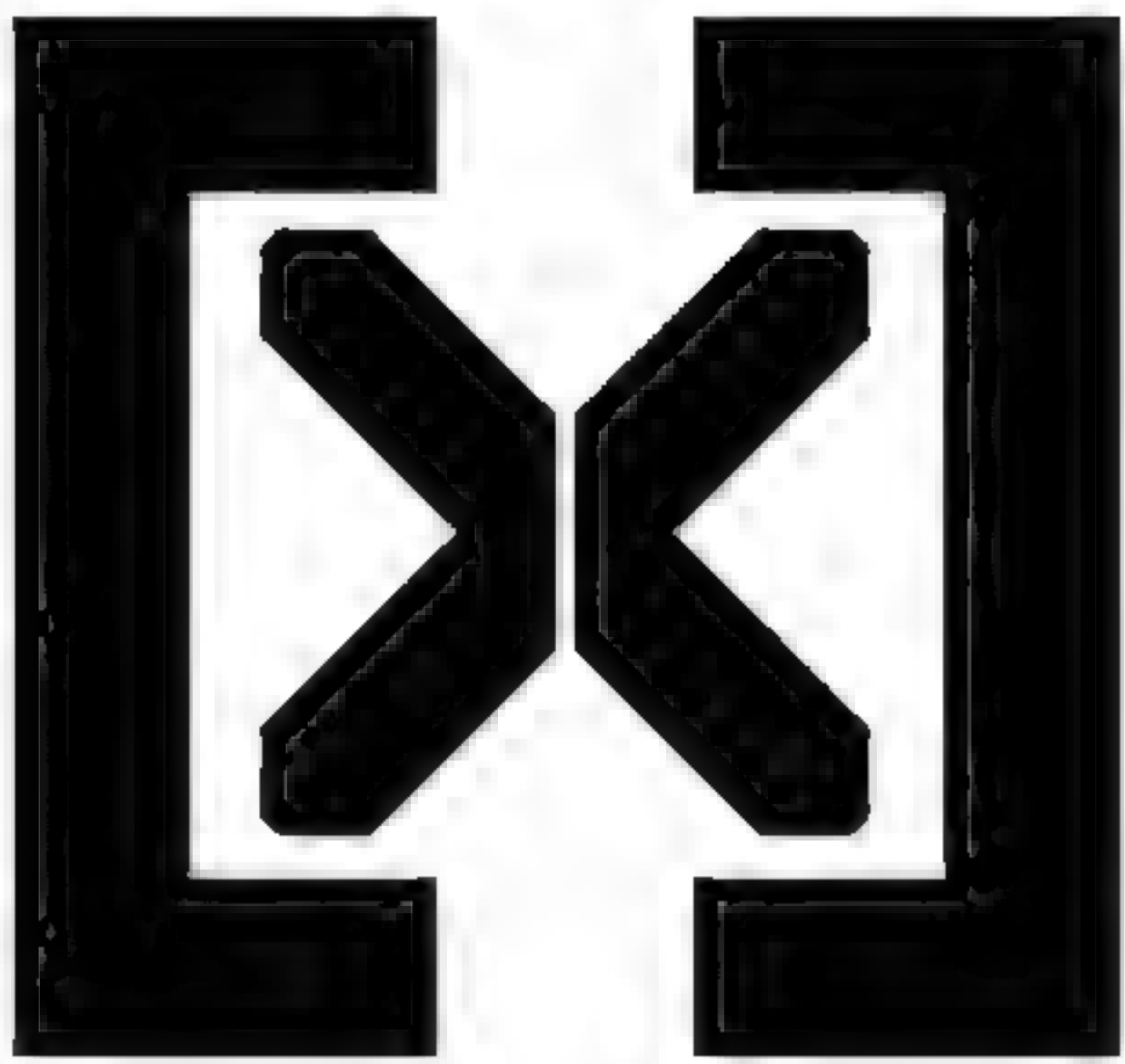
All the
moves are
yours and they
can take you
wherever you
choose--or more
importantly--
where fate
demands.

TINK!



What
the--





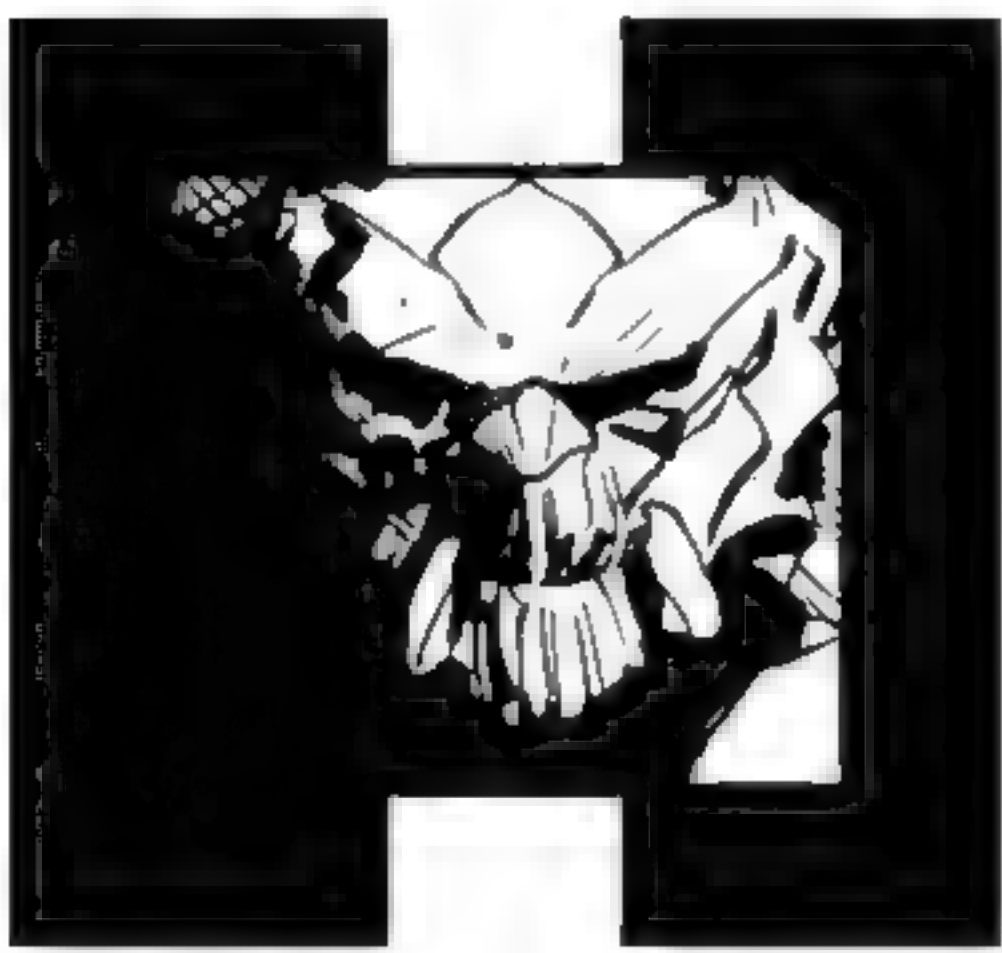
[kra_[0.10]
[koa_[0.10]

[kra_[0.X]
[koa_[0.X]

EMPYRE

The Kree and Skrull Empires have united under Emperor Hulkling to fight a common enemy: the Celestial Messiah, Quoi, and his plant-like Cotati, who have claimed Earth’s Moon as their own!

The X-MEN began to fight back on the moon, but in doing so drew the attention of the Cotati to a much bigger target: Earth...and Krakoa.



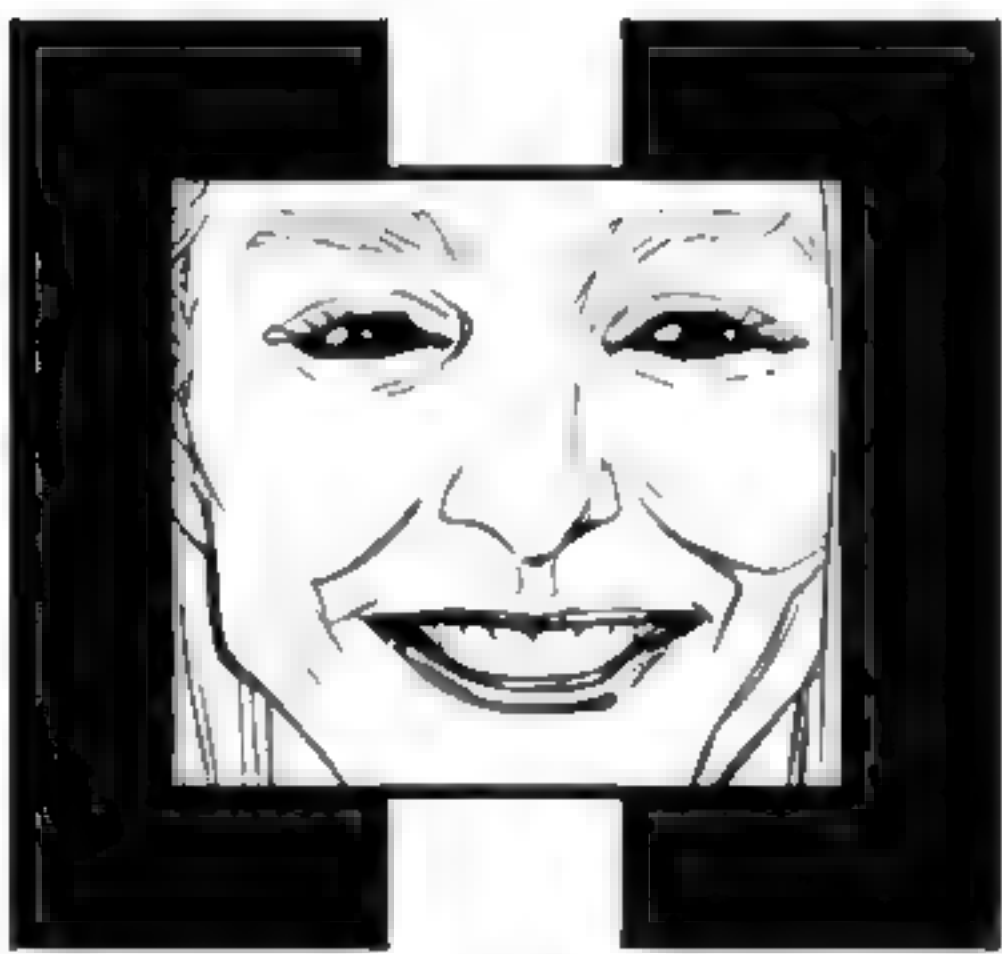
Rockslide



Loa



Anole



Summoner



Exodus



Magneto



Magik



Magma



Iceman

A REPORT TO THE QUIET COUNCIL FROM THE CAPTAIN COMMANDER

RE: ASYMMETRICAL WARFARE

For the eyes of the council only.

This a brief overview of our recent captains' quorum, but what should be of particular interest to you are our recommendations regarding enhanced techniques in combat scenarios for mutants with combat experience.

These proposals come with zero reservations and have the full support of the quorum. Research and expansion in this area has our highest recommendation.

QUORUM NOTES

Island readiness:

Following the multiple recent incursions of Krakoan space, the quorum's position is that our existing dome of protected space should be expanded through a series of encircling chain islands. We can construct these ourselves and moor them to Krakoa at selected intervals, but we first want to check with Cypher to see if the island can -- and is willing to -- do this itself.

Mutant training:

We know that we're trying to create an atmosphere that is serene and non-militaristic, but Bishop has been cataloging the amount of actual training being done on Danger island in the Atlantic archipelago, and the numbers are much lower than expected. The Krakoan population is clocking in at less than two percent.

We are not suggesting that everyone be required to become proficient at hand-to-hand combat and using their powers in an aggressive fashion, but the consensus here is that we could do a little more.

Archipelago access:

Following the suggestion of the council, we created an escape plan based on tiered evacuations and have had the island telepaths request to and seed this information into the minds of all Krakoans. We consulted with Monet regarding extra-island X-Corp employee procedures, and she also recommended packaging this into the language dump for any new mutants arriving to the island and into all resurrection protocols.

Omega Level mutants:

See below regarding enchanted techniques.

Enhanced combat techniques:

The quorum had a prolonged and rather interesting conversation about the Five and possibilities of conjoined power sets in both offensive and defensive situations.

We workshoped a single mutant's powers [using Magneto as our point of reference*] and how that mutant's power could integrate with others and -- limiting ourselves to three or fewer complementary mutants -- we came up with roughly 40 useful combinations in military scenarios [28 offensive, 12 defensive]. This, we all agree, is worth further study, and I've created a list of necessary resources to move forward. Additionally, Bishop has volunteered to preside over our first mutant war college.

As stated above, this plan has our highest recommendation.

**I've also attached the Magneto combinations to this file for the council to review.*



Krakoa.
The next day.

Are you
afraid?

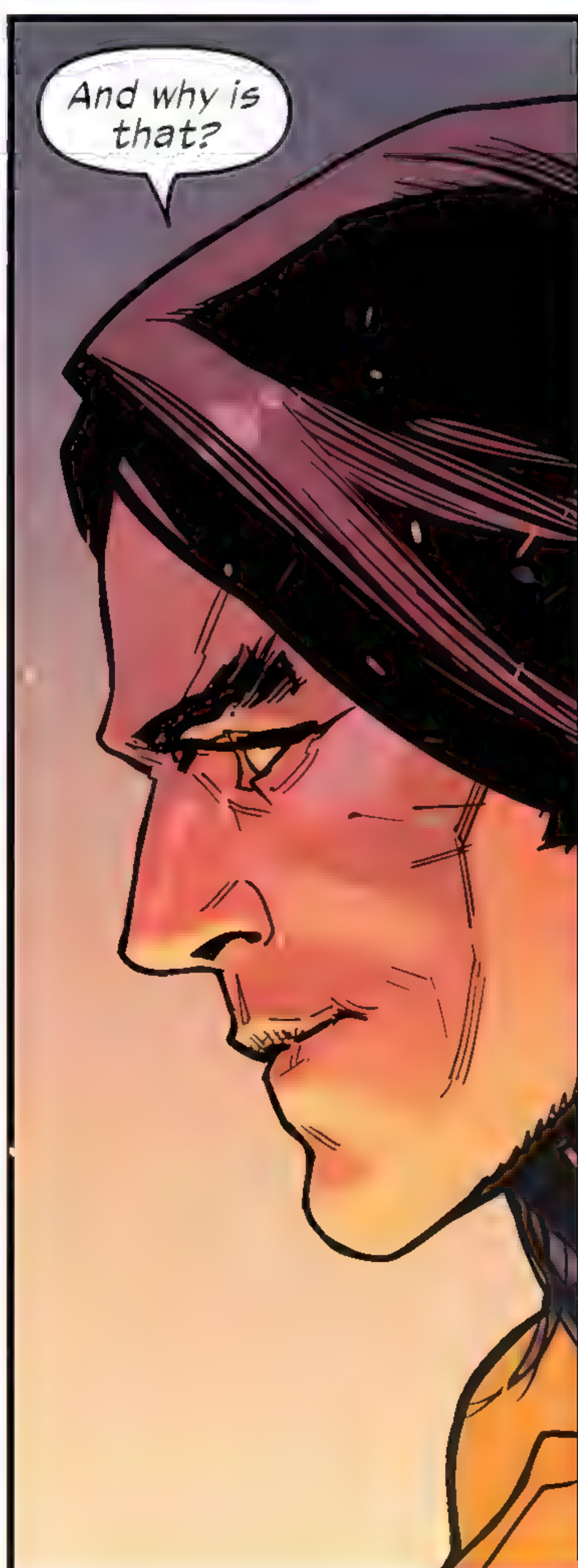
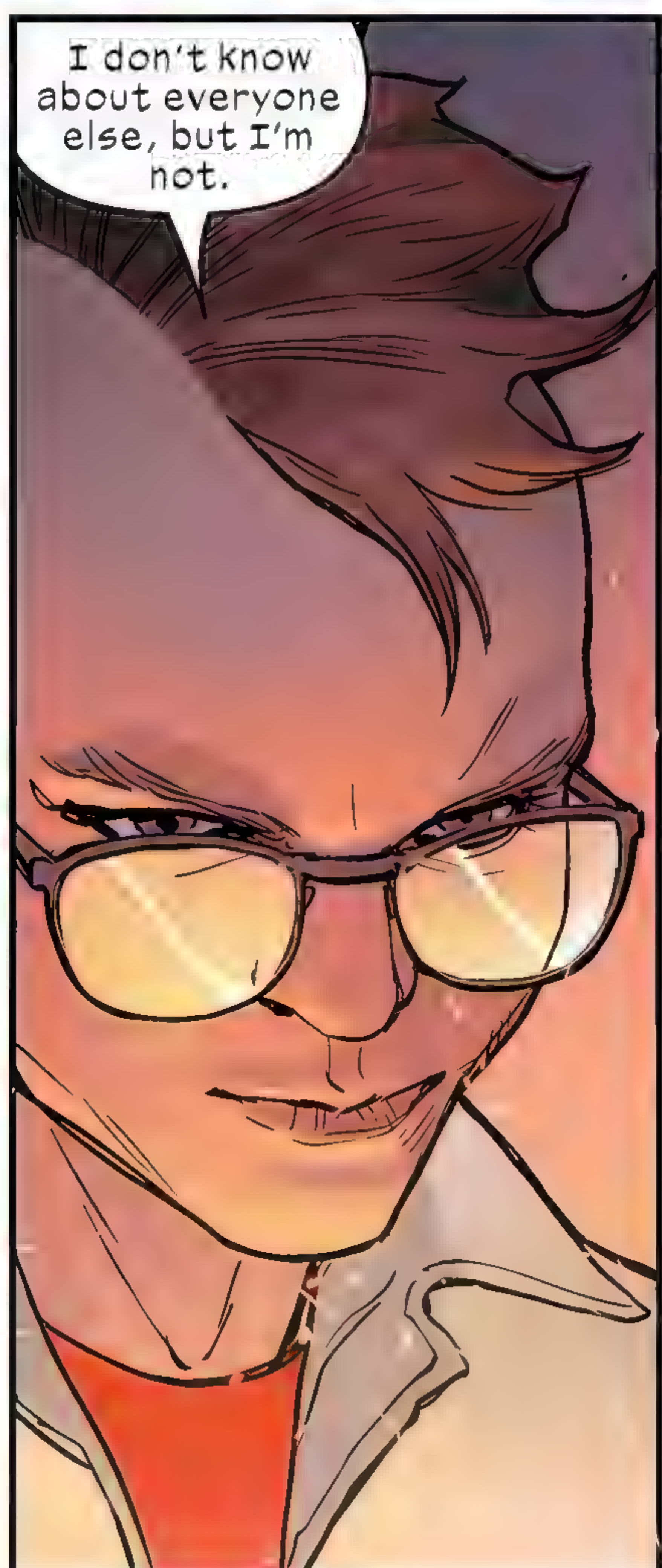
I ask because it's important
that we never lie to one another.
It takes courage to speak the
truth--it takes courage to
hear it.

Today,
mutants died.
So I ask...are you
afraid?



I don't know
about everyone
else, but I'm
not.

And why is
that?



Because they're
coming back.

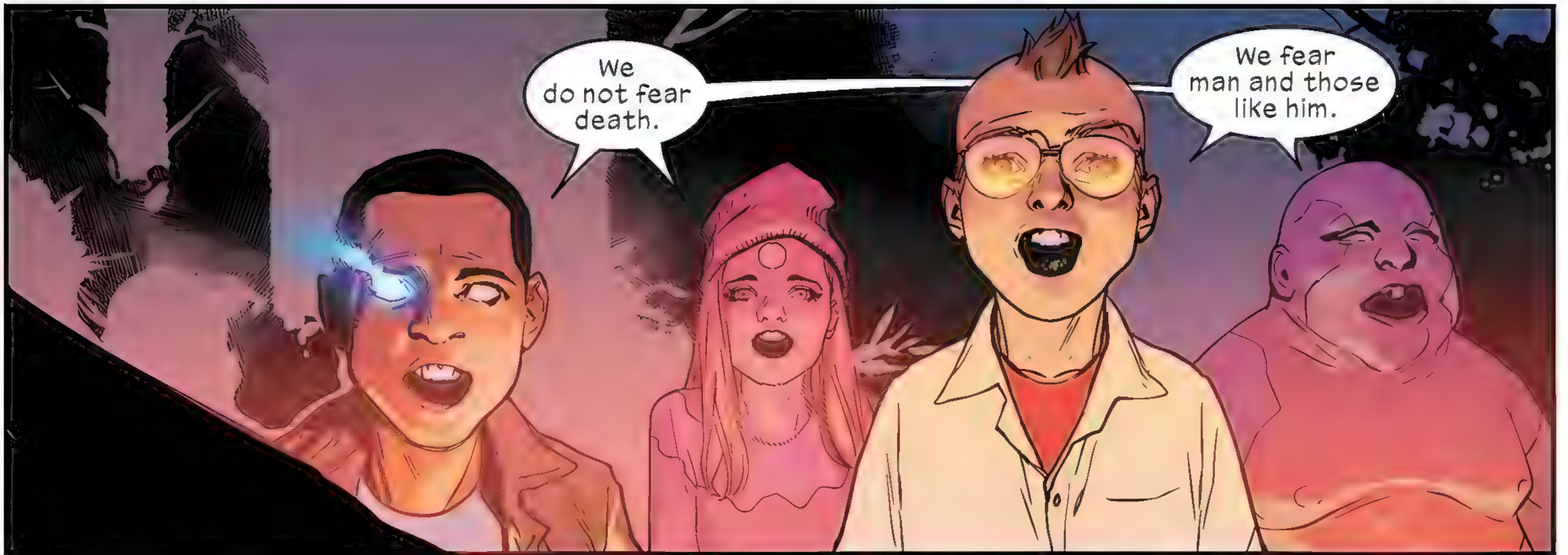
Yes. The
Five are hard
at work...and
tomorrow we see
our family again--
for some it will
be as if it never
happened.

But it
did happen.
And that's what you
need to remember
about days
like today.

We can erase
the *effect* but not
the *cause*.

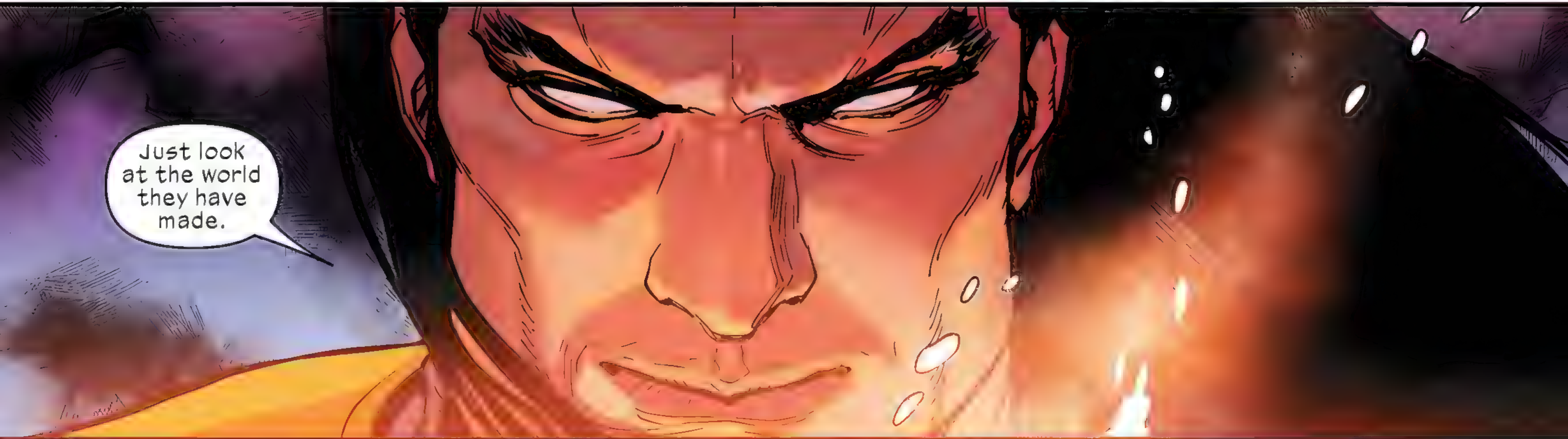


So
are you
afraid?



We do not fear death.

We fear man and those like him.



Just look at the world they have made.



Exodus...

Why don't we stop them?

You cannot stop someone from being what they are.

We could destroy them--erase them--but then we would be as they are.



Then what can we do?

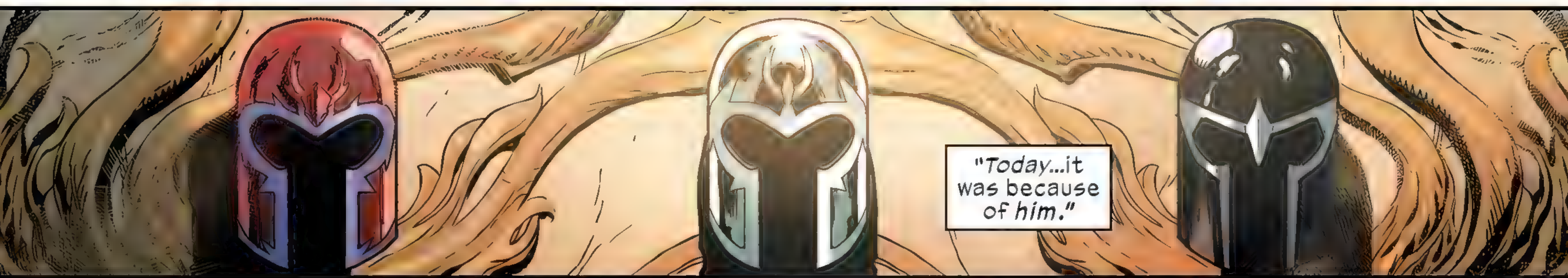
You--all of you--will grow and play and live and love as you should.

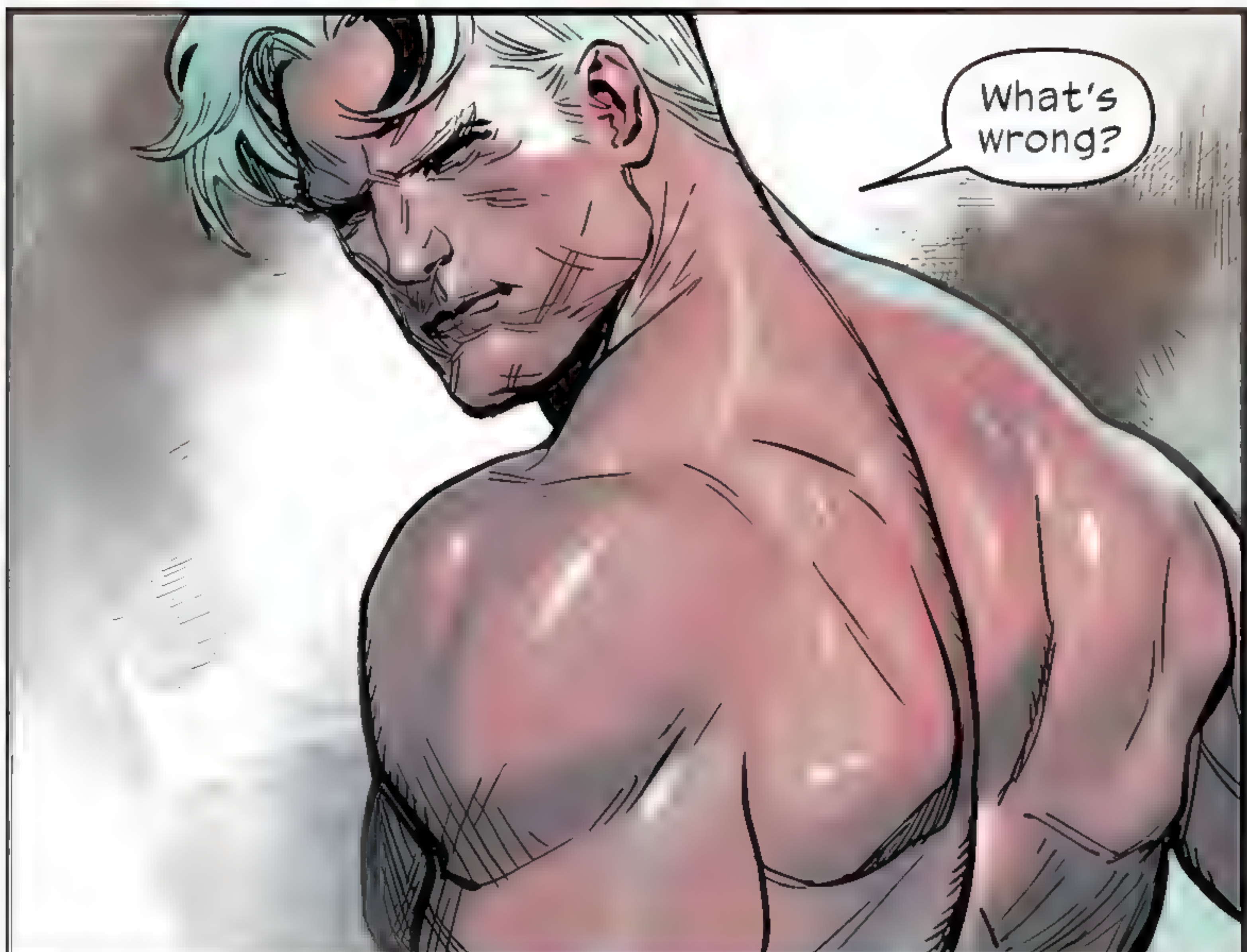
Leave progress to us. You are in... good hands.



Most of you were evacuated to the Krakoa archipelago on the other side of the world after the attack began...

So you did not see what happened today. You may have heard *whispers*, you may have heard some *facts*...but you have not heard the *whole story*.





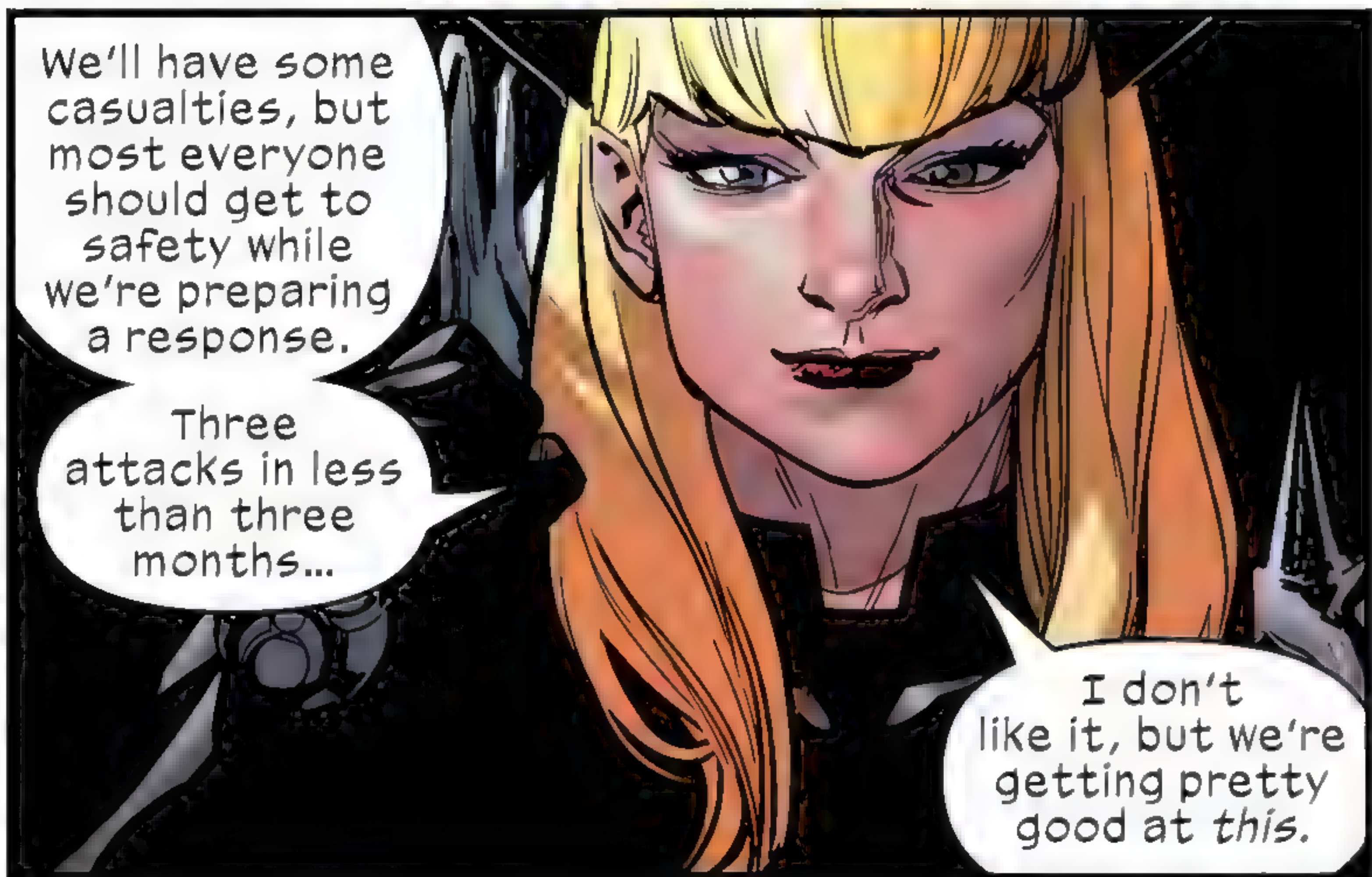
What's wrong?



We have *incoming*.

Some kind of large incursion-- there are three ships on a beeline for Krakoa.

Professor X is coordinating with all the other telepaths. We should have most of the noncombatants and children to the Atlantic bunker before they get here.



We'll have some casualties, but most everyone should get to safety while we're preparing a response.

Three attacks in less than three months...

I don't like it, but we're getting pretty good at *this*.



I am *tired* of this.

Where is Cyclops?

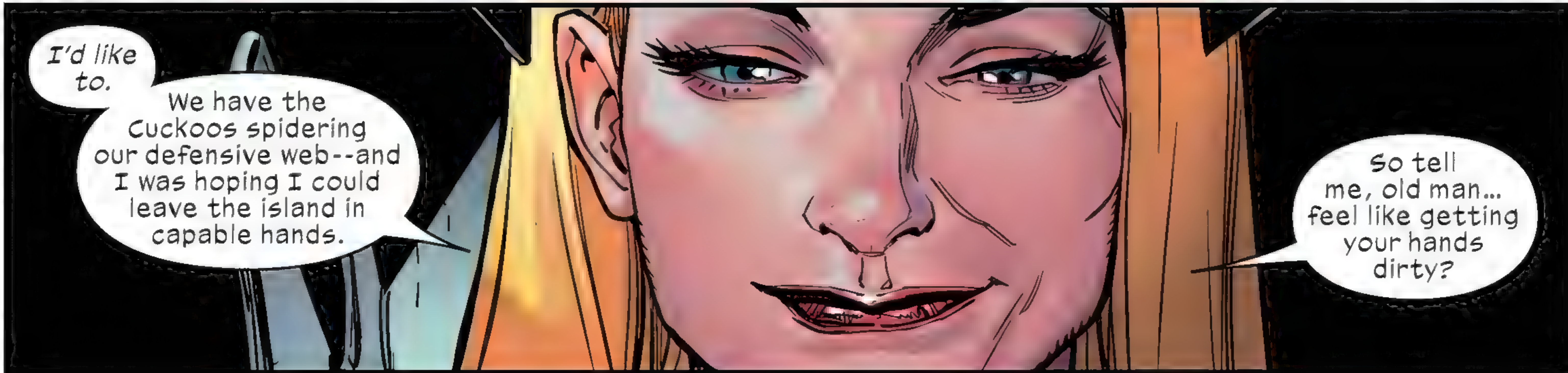


This attack actually originated from the Moon--they're using it as a staging area of some sort--he's on it now, but it's the front line. *Where he should be.*

So alien? *Not human?*

Yeah. That's right.

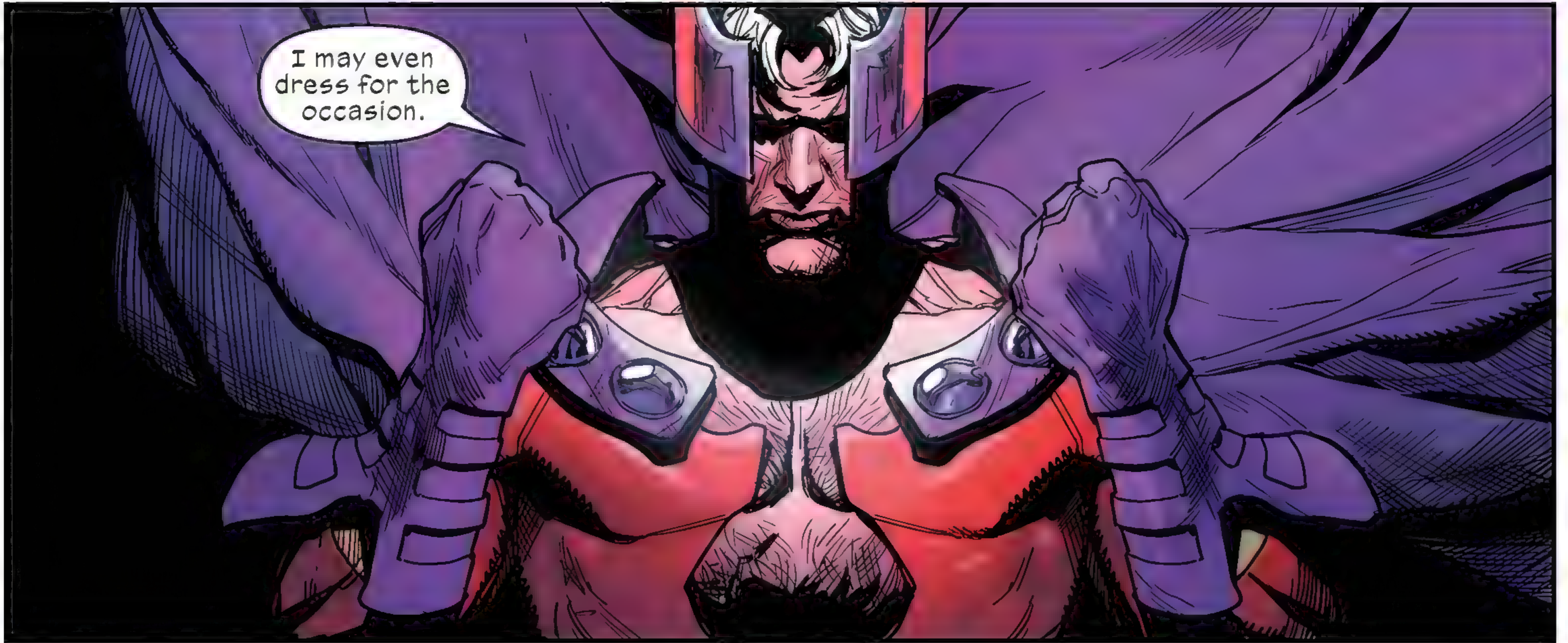
Are you and the other captains headed to join him there?

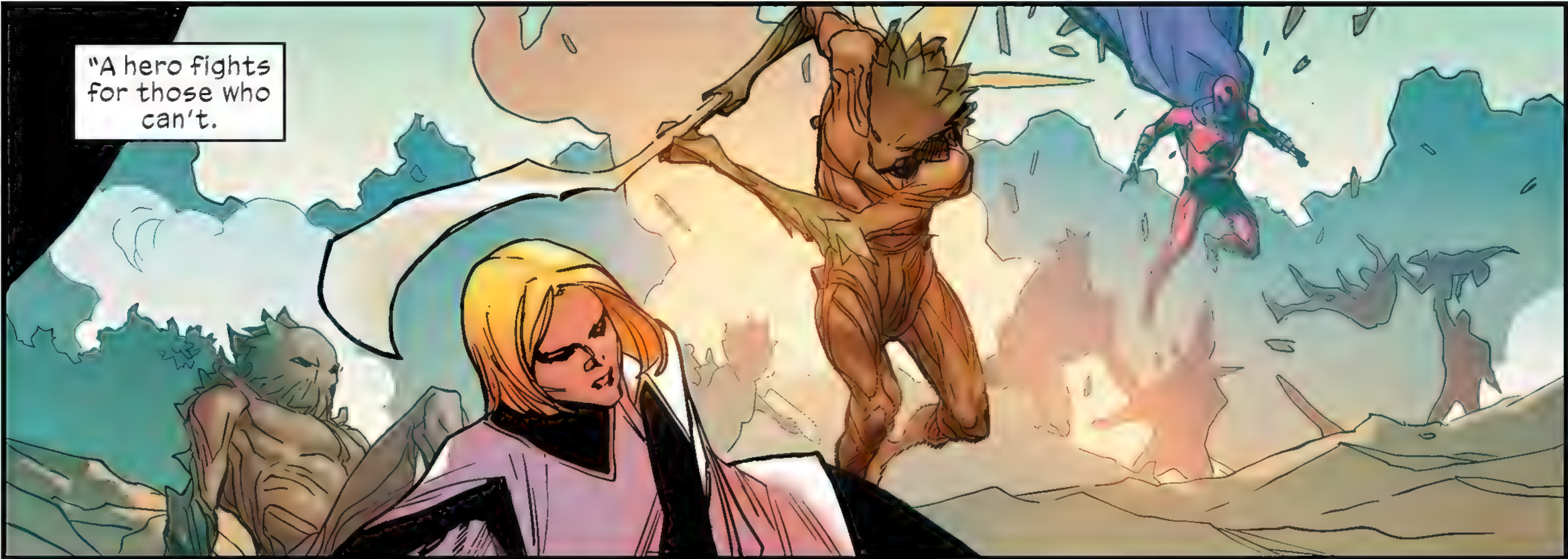


I'd like to.

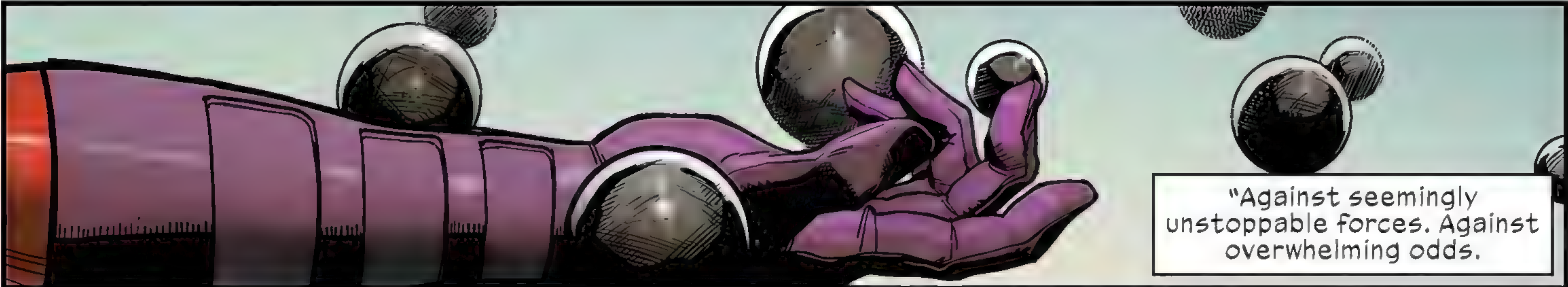
We have the Cuckoos spidering our defensive web--and I was hoping I could leave the island in capable hands.

So tell me, old man... feel like getting your hands dirty?





"A hero fights for those who can't.



"Against seemingly unstoppable forces. Against overwhelming odds.



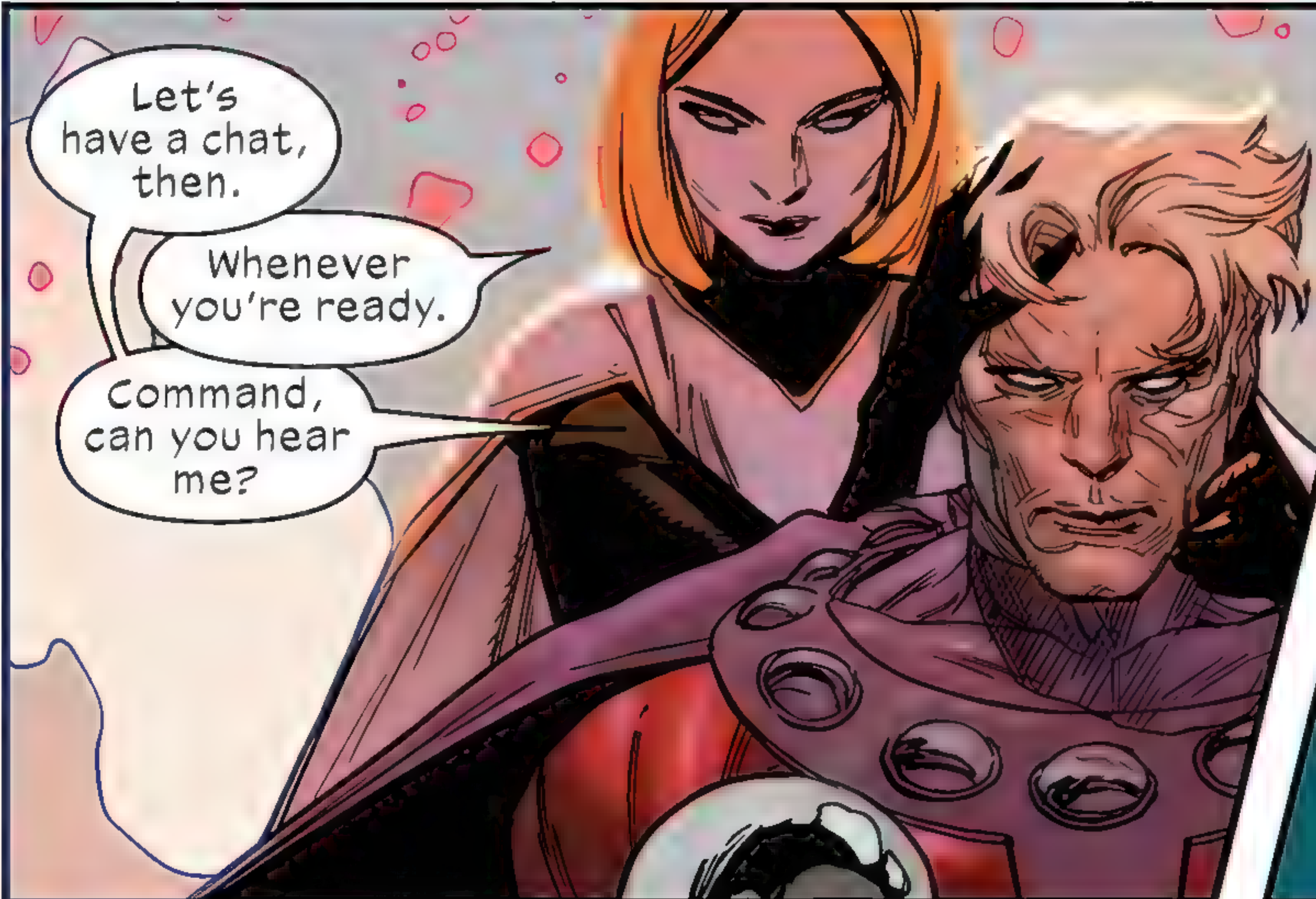
"And whenever they are asked to risk their own lives to save someone else...

"...they ignore the danger and step forward to be counted."

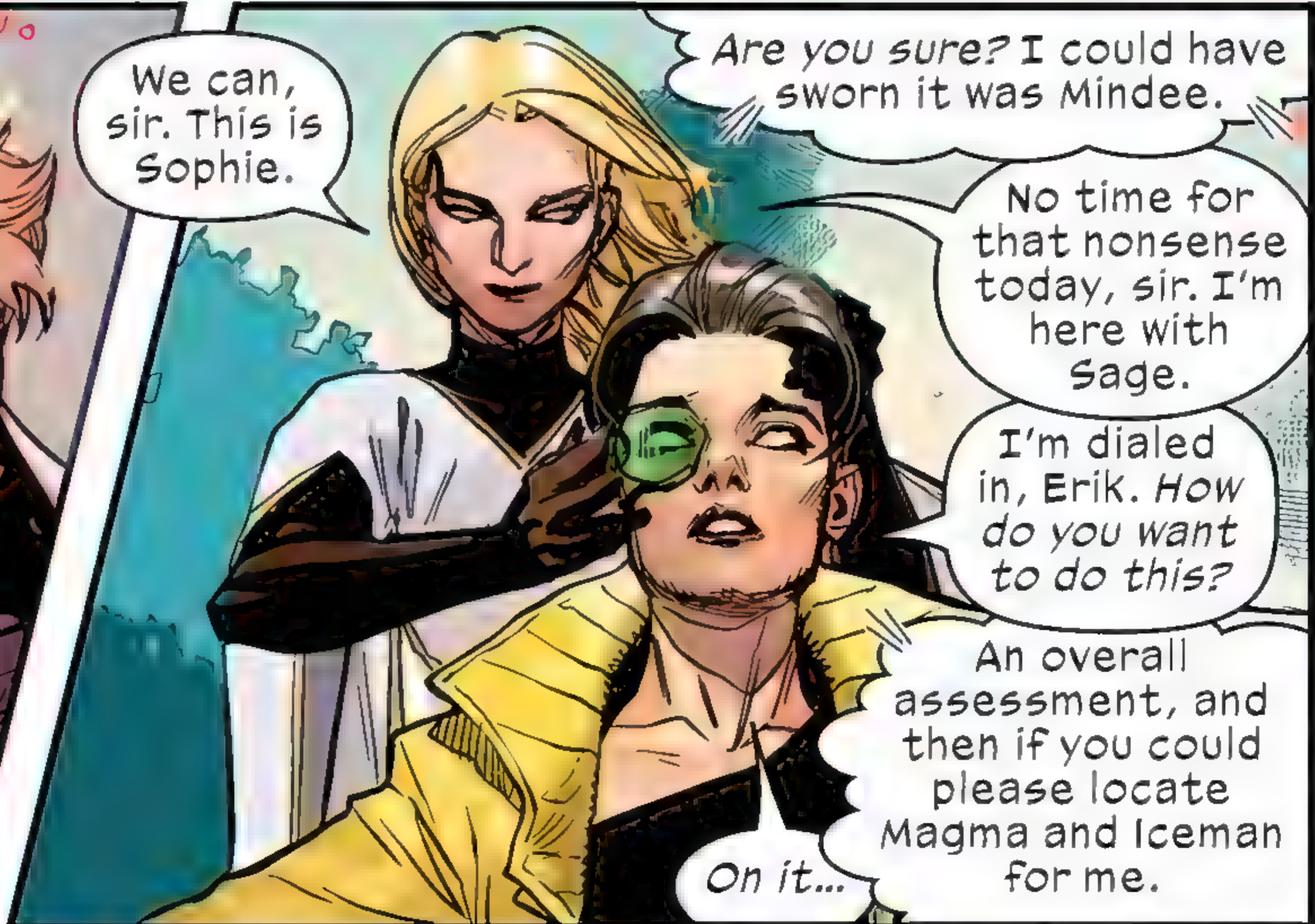


Of course, Mindee.
Thank you, sir.
Actually, I'm Sophie, sir.

No time for that nonsense today, child. Is one of you with command?
Yes, sir.

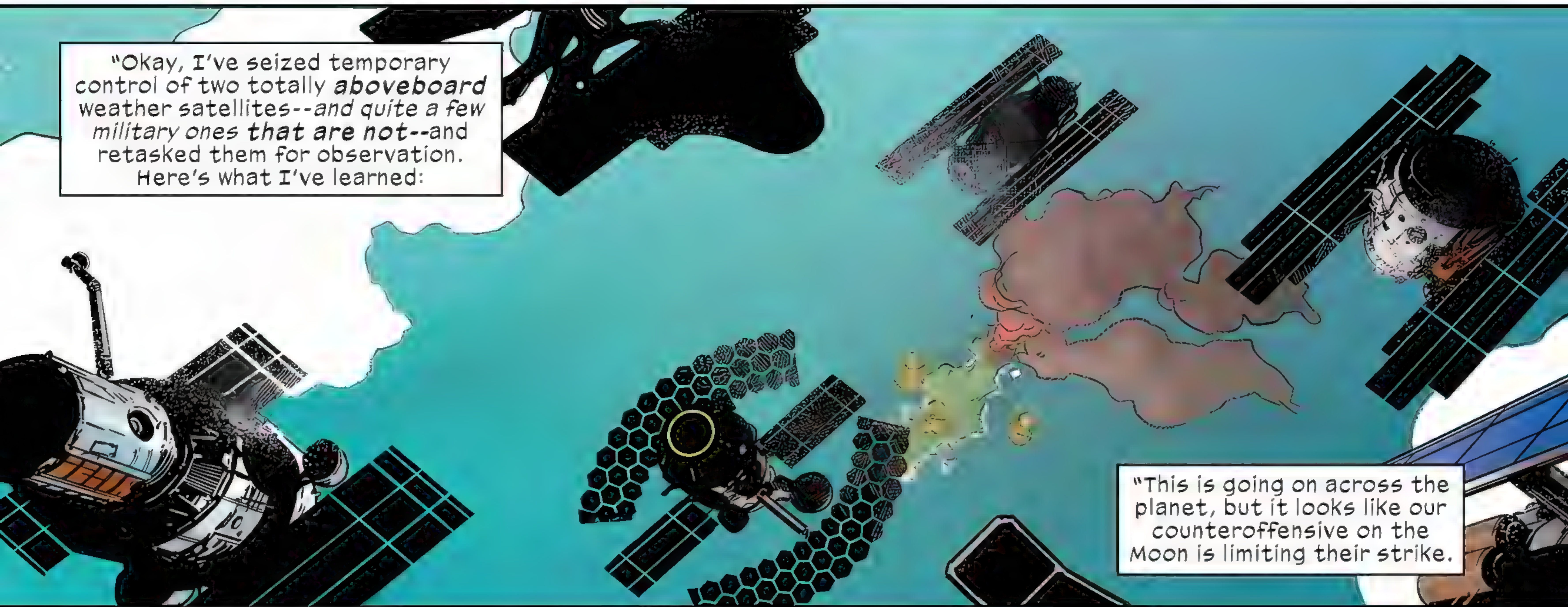


Let's have a chat, then.
Whenever you're ready.
Command, can you hear me?



We can, sir. This is Sophie.

Are you sure? I could have sworn it was Mindee.
No time for that nonsense today, sir. I'm here with Sage.
I'm dialed in, Erik. How do you want to do this?
An overall assessment, and then if you could please locate Magma and Iceman for me.
On it...



"Okay, I've seized temporary control of two totally *aboveboard* weather satellites--and quite a few *military ones that are not*--and retasked them for observation. Here's what I've learned:

"This is going on across the planet, but it looks like our counteroffensive on the Moon is limiting their strike."



"Black Tom is holding his own with our island-wide defenses."

"And we've begun to push back."



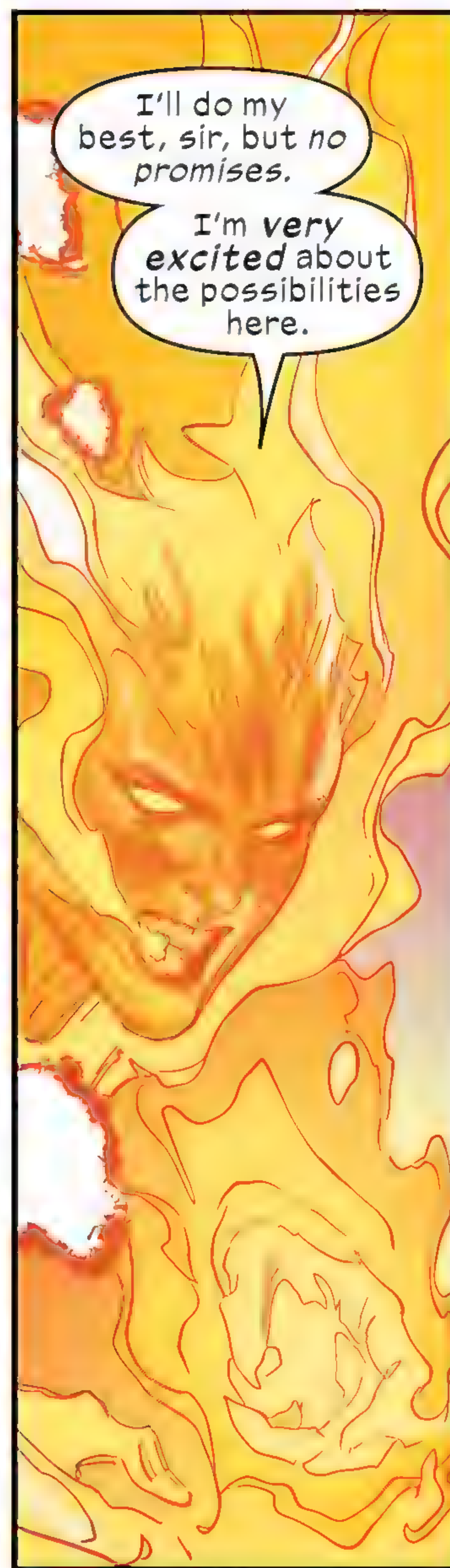
"Iceman is helping Storm to the north."

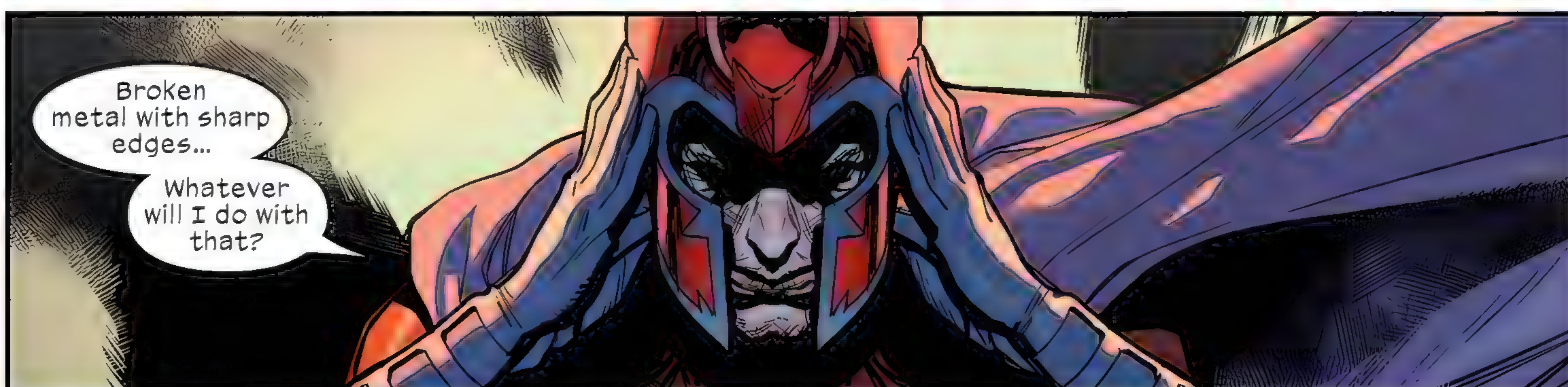
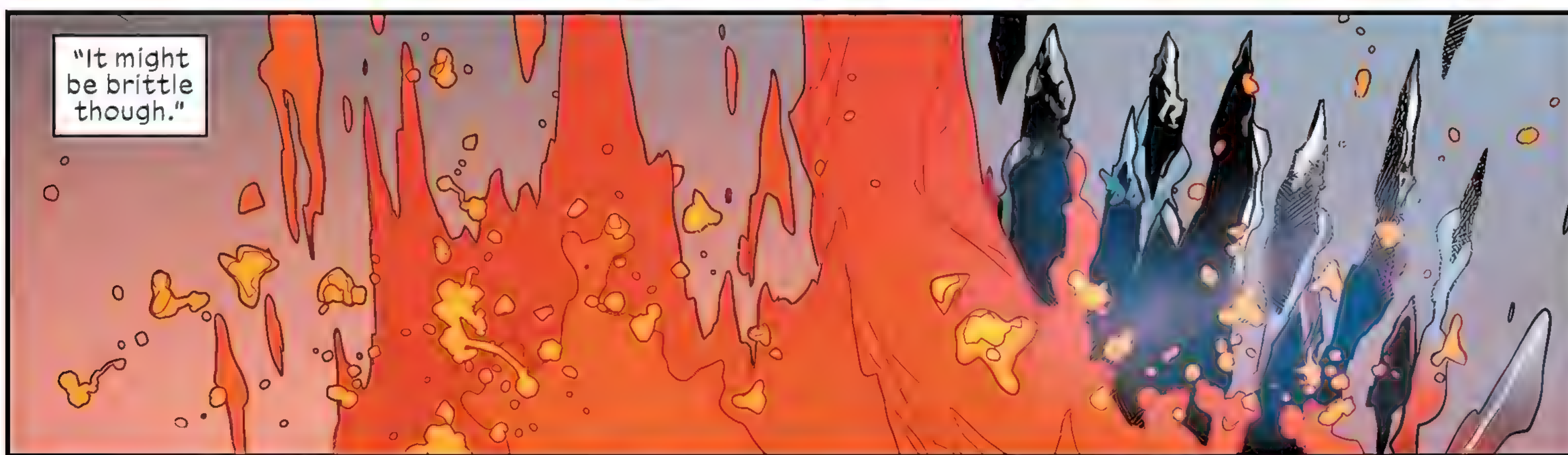
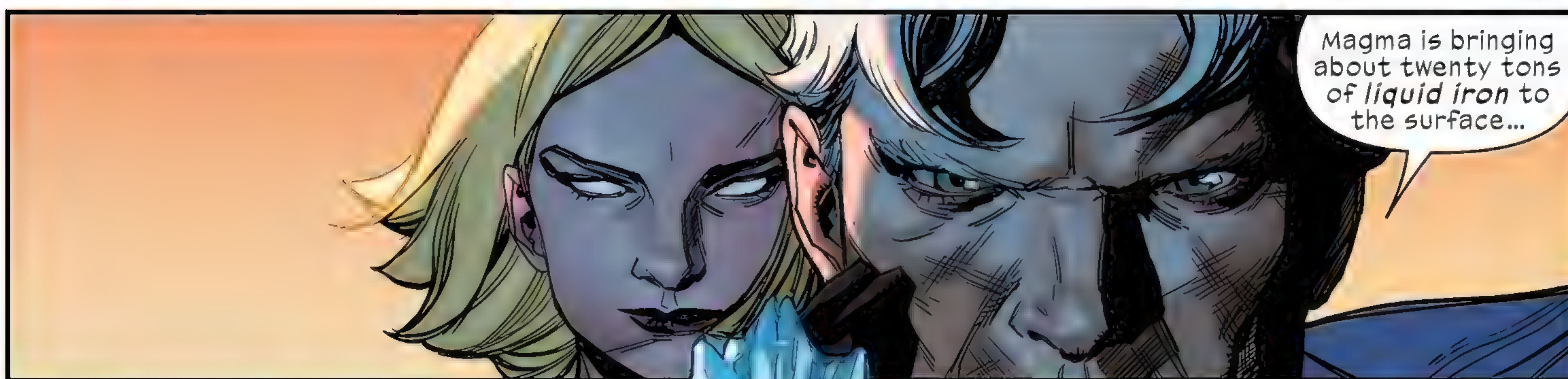


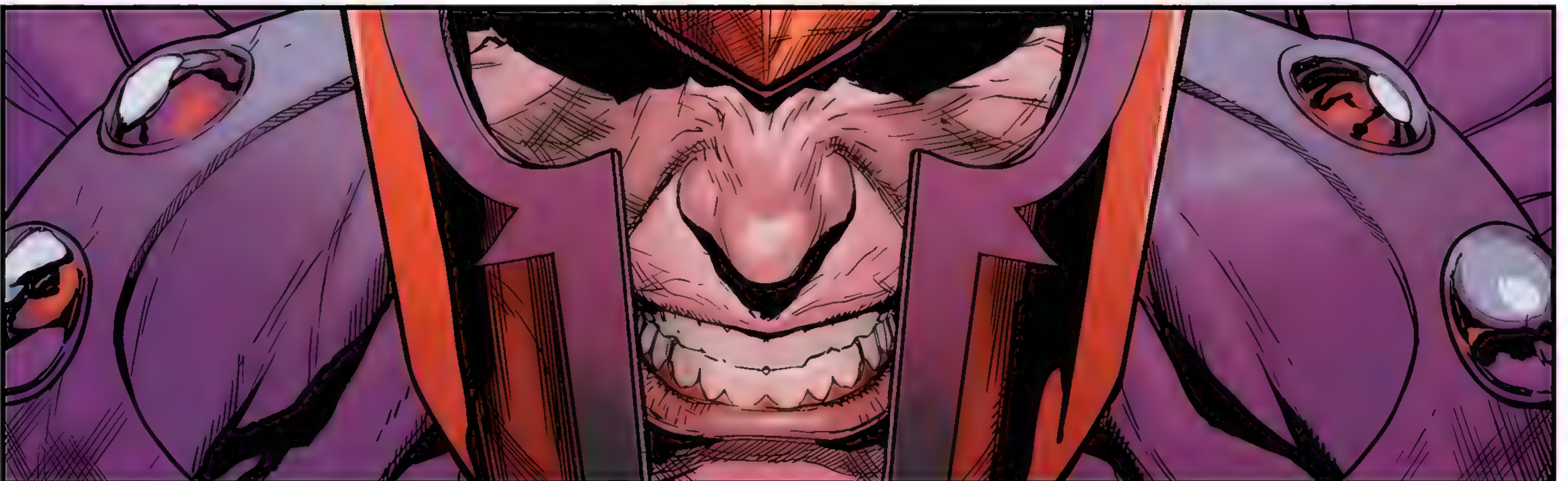
"And Esme has just located Magma about a mile southwest of there."

She was getting ready to take out one of the ships with an eruption.

Should we hold?









Soft meaty creatures...

...and your cursed metal rain. Tell me who does this... Tell me or--

BHAH!



I've broken another one, Hhurr.

I think by the time I'm done here I will--

THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK



Huh!
Eh!



No.



My sweet Hhurr...I trained you in the fields of Plonn. I bred you for war and let you eat of the limited enemies I allow myself to have.

Who did this?

Who dares?



I dare.
Honestly, it's
a failing that's
plagued me my
entire life.

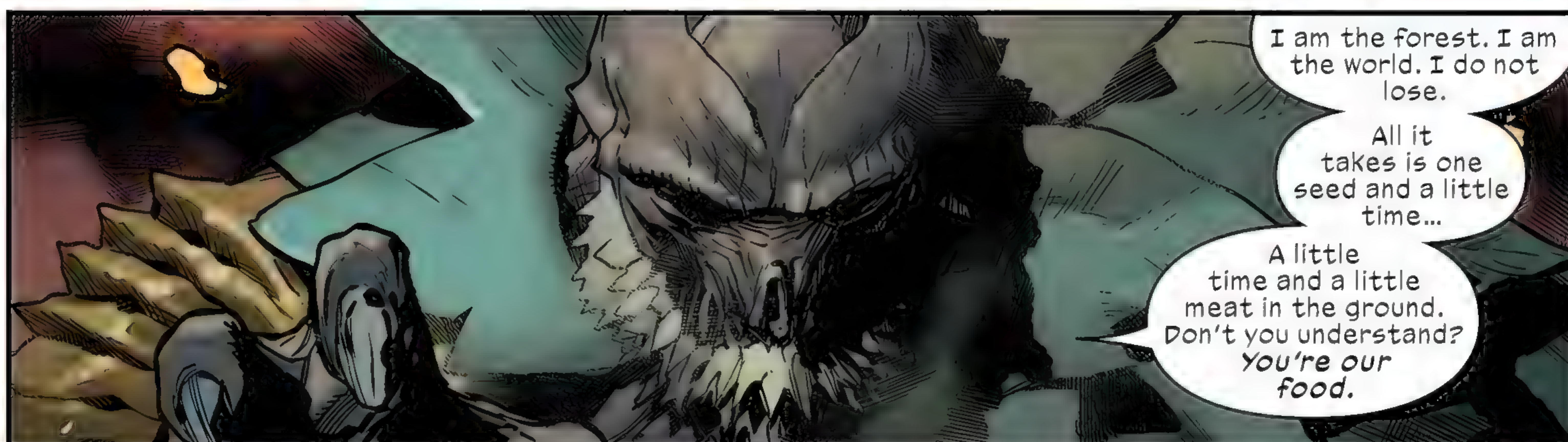
You are
clearly in command
here, so I'm offering
you a gift. Order your
men to leave and never
return. Do this, and you
can save them and
save yourself.

Friend.



Do you have any idea
on how many worlds
I had stood facing
someone like
you?

Some
proud meat,
thinking your
meat thoughts
of war and
valor.



I am the forest. I am
the world. I do not
lose.

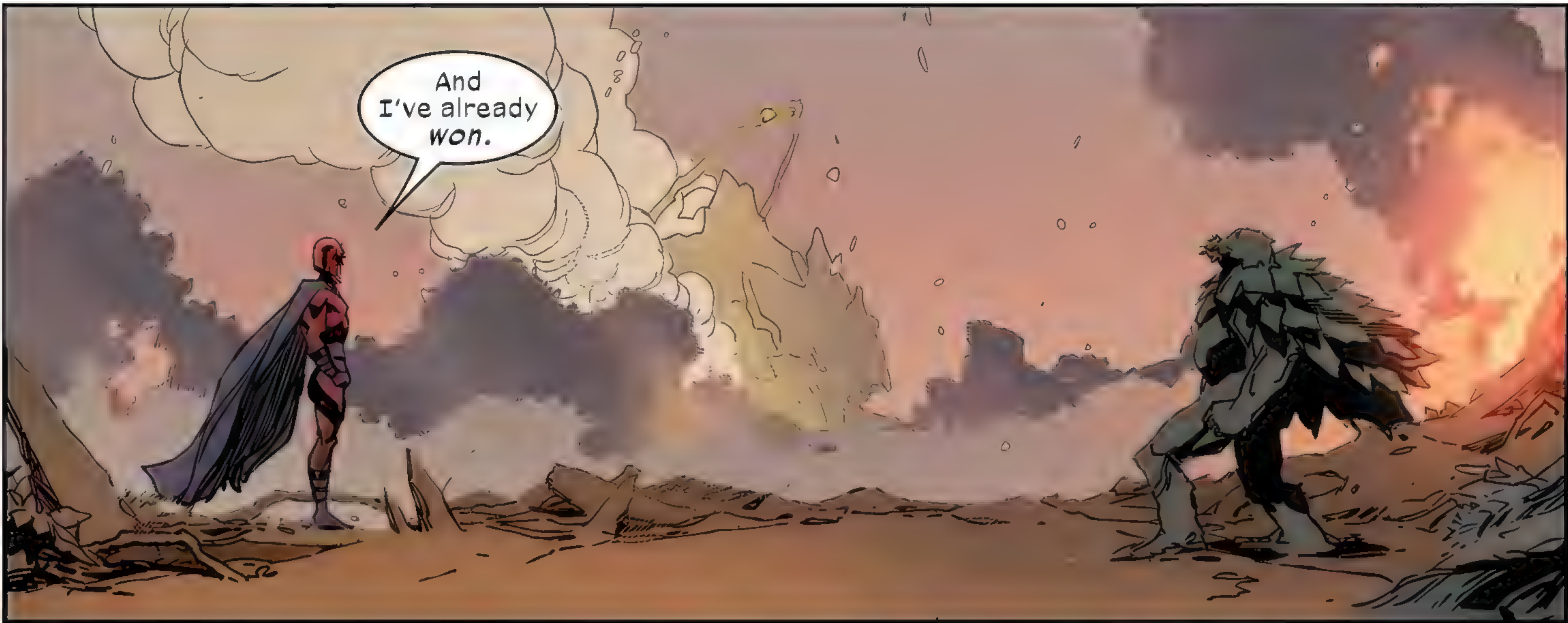
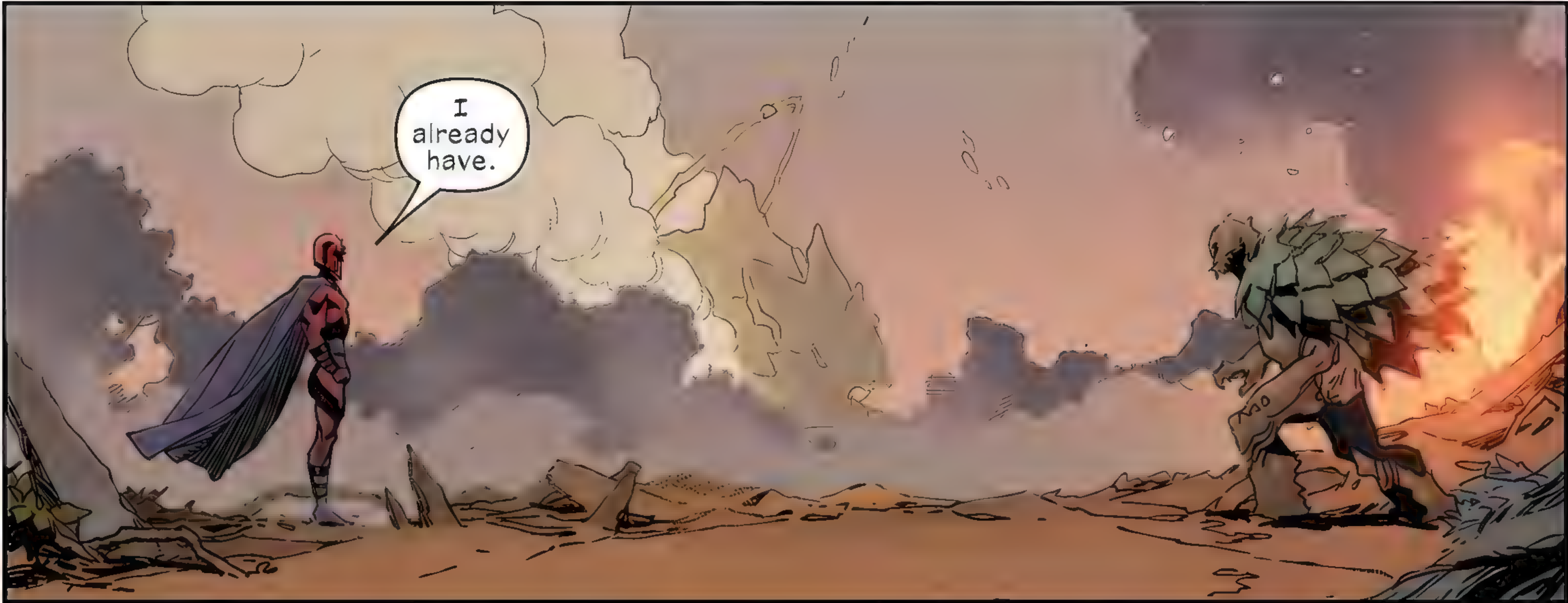
All it
takes is one
seed and a little
time...

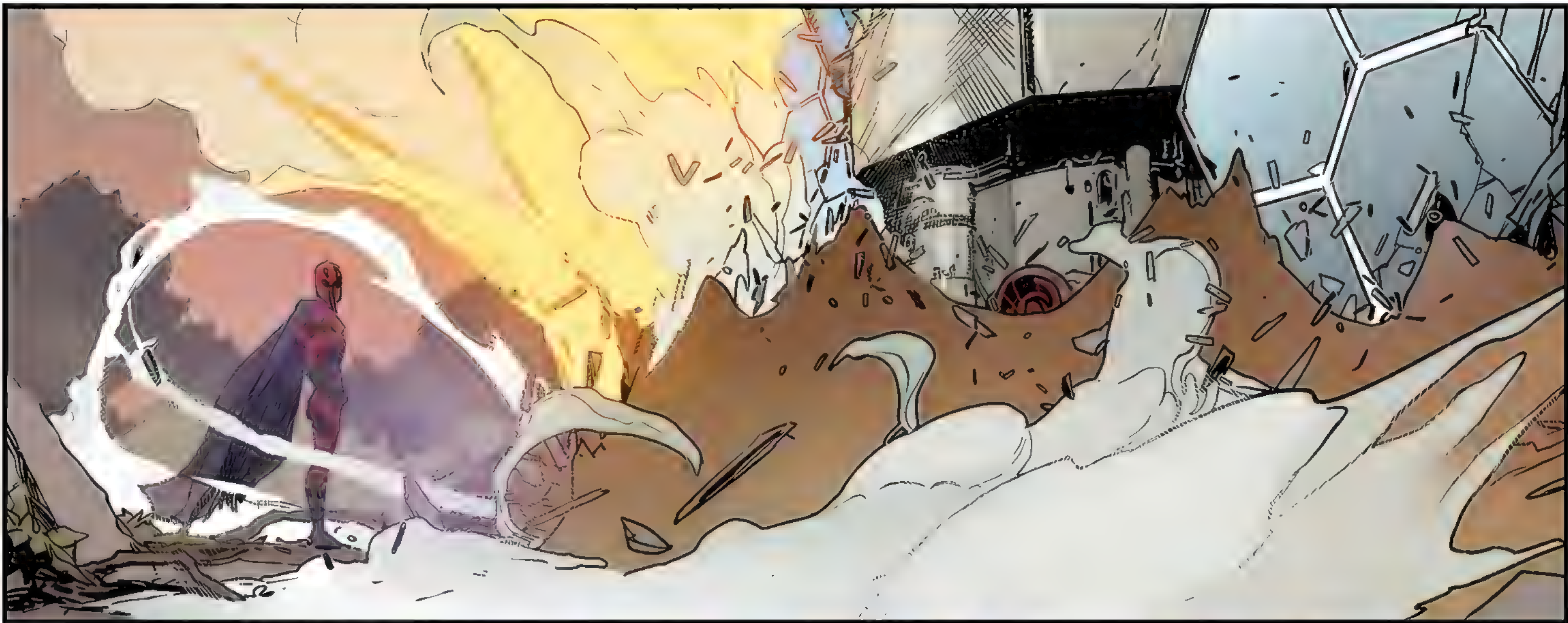
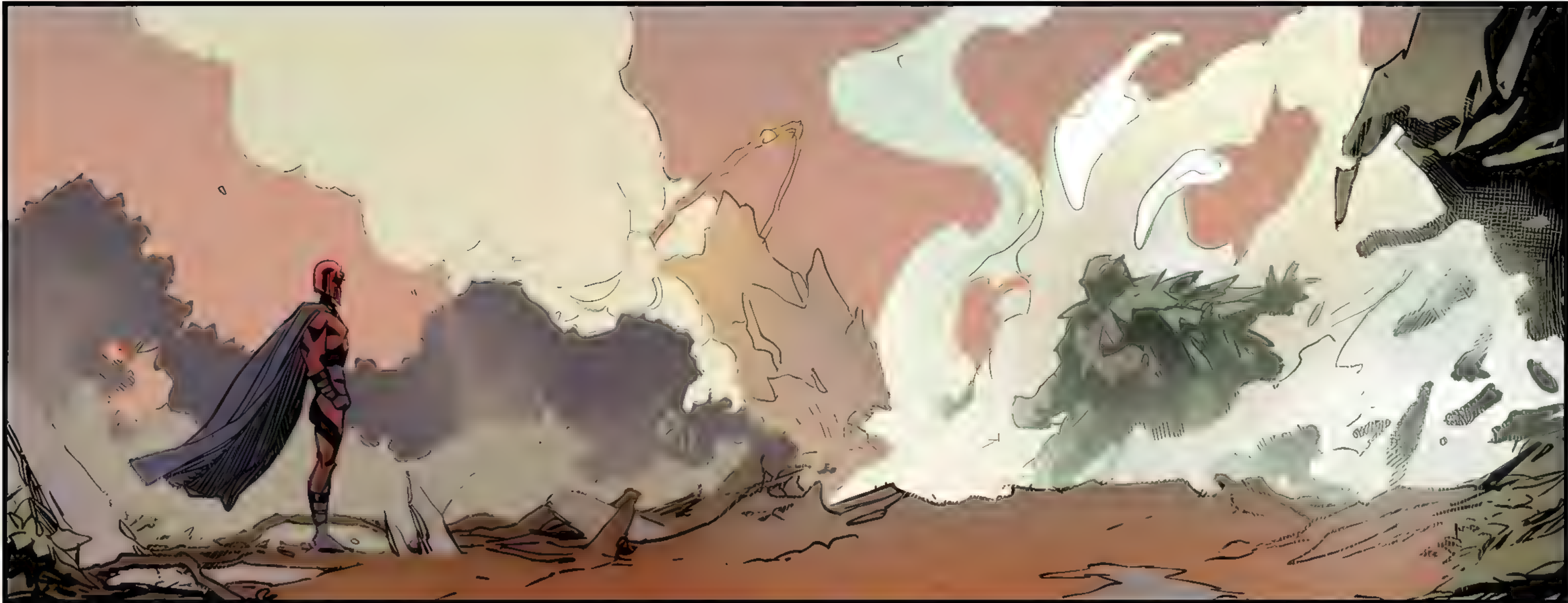
A little
time and a little
meat in the ground.
Don't you understand?
**You're our
food.**

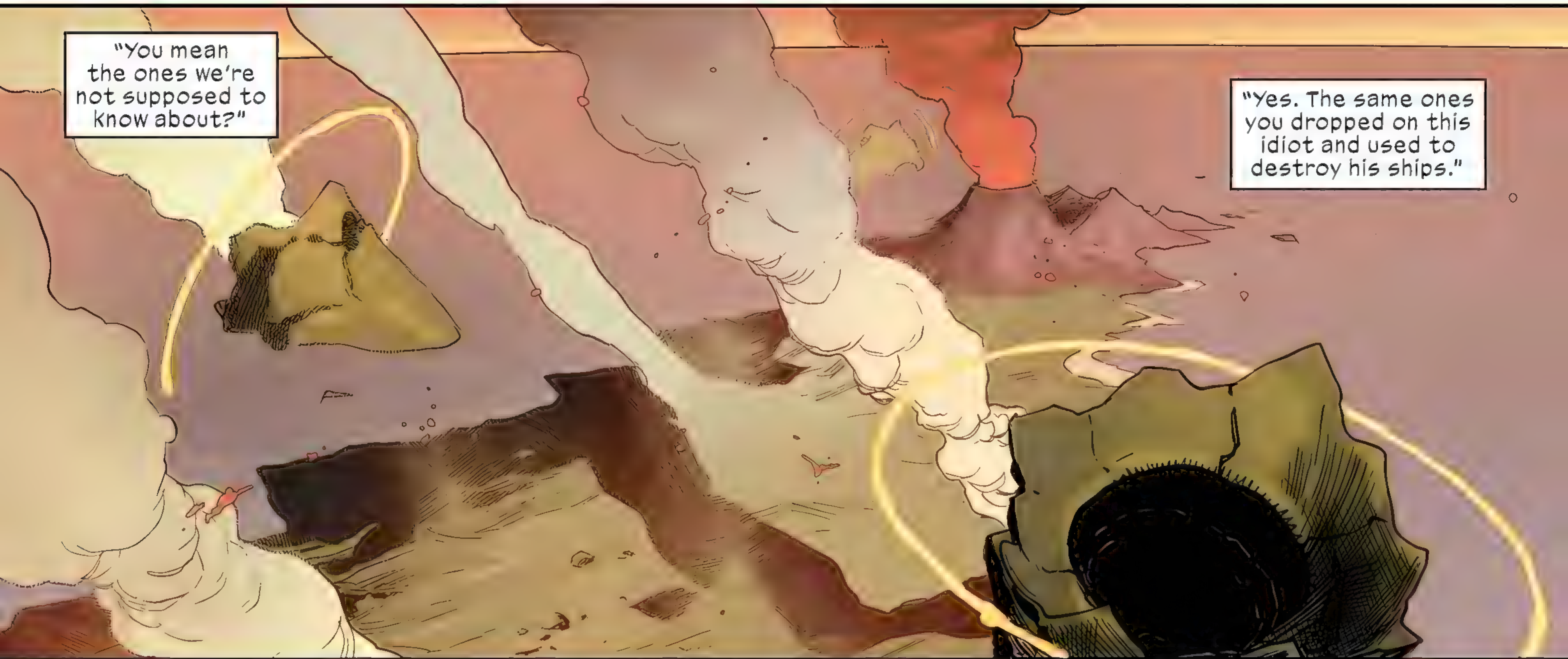


I'm not
going anywhere.
But if you want to
fight fate...if you want
this to be about blood,
I can always play
the butcher.

So if it's
a fight you're
looking for--
**then fight
me!**







"You mean the ones we're not supposed to know about?"

"Yes. The same ones you dropped on this idiot and used to destroy his ships."



Well, *if asked*, tell them we have no idea what they're talking about.

Understood, sir. Anything else?

Yes. Please ask Sage to activate the closest gateway to the Moon.



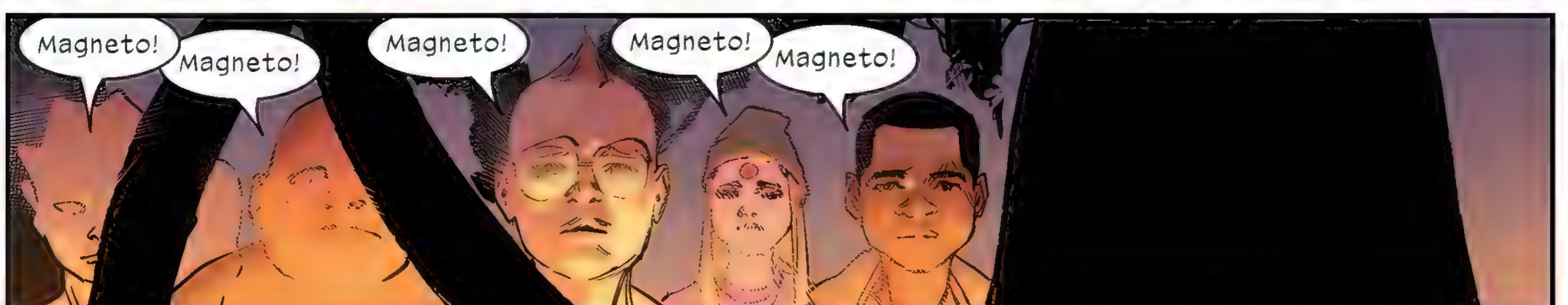
Time to put an end to this whole episode.



And that, children, is what a hero *is*...

It's what a hero *does*. Now, tell me...

What's your hero's name?



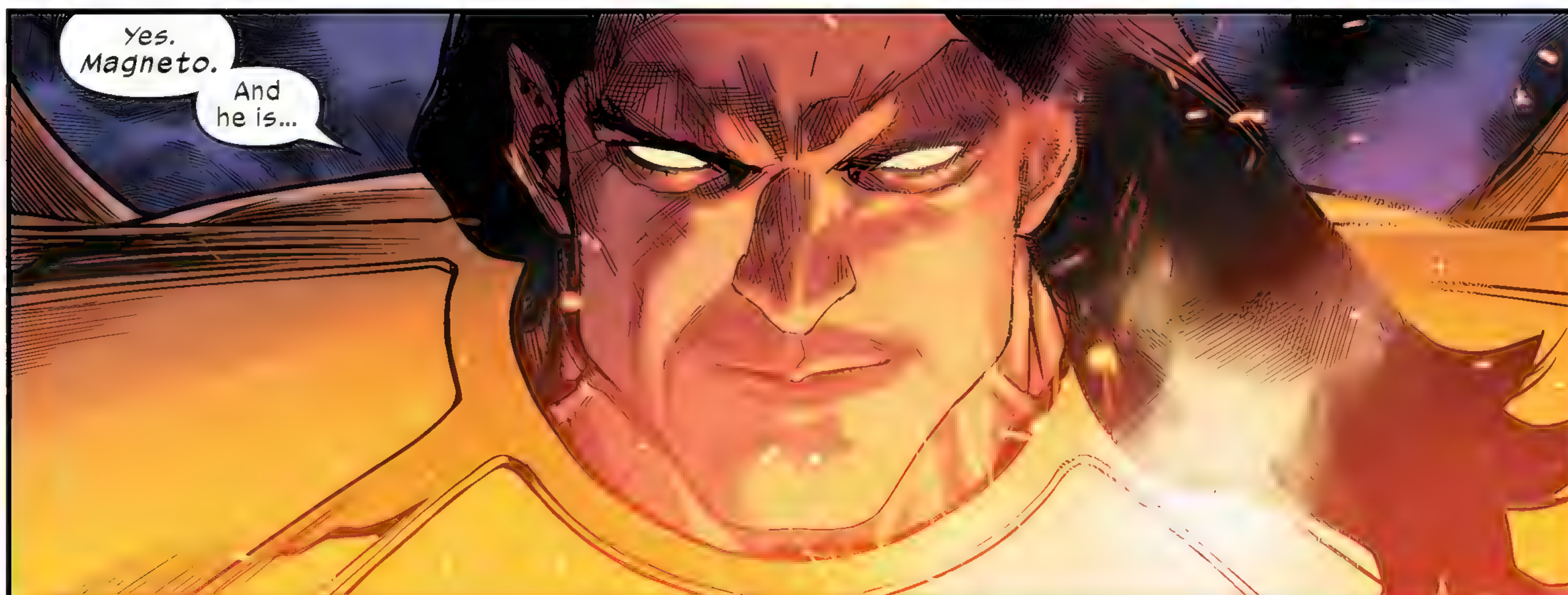
Magneto!

Magneto!

Magneto!

Magneto!

Magneto!

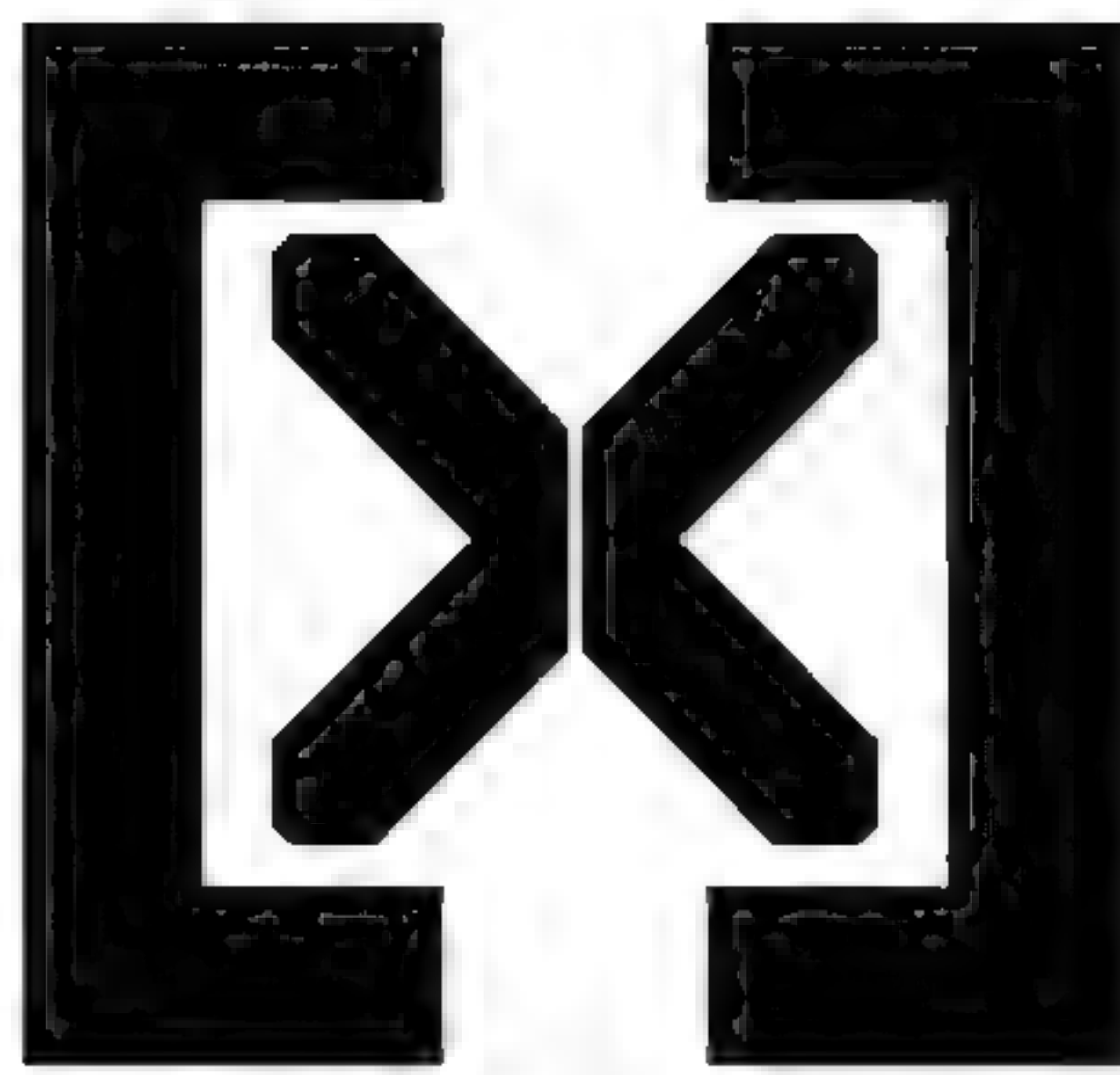




Red
Reis

The World

15



[kra_[0.1]
[koa_[0.1]

[kra_[0.X]
[koa_[0.X]

CHARLIE AND THE BABY FACTORY

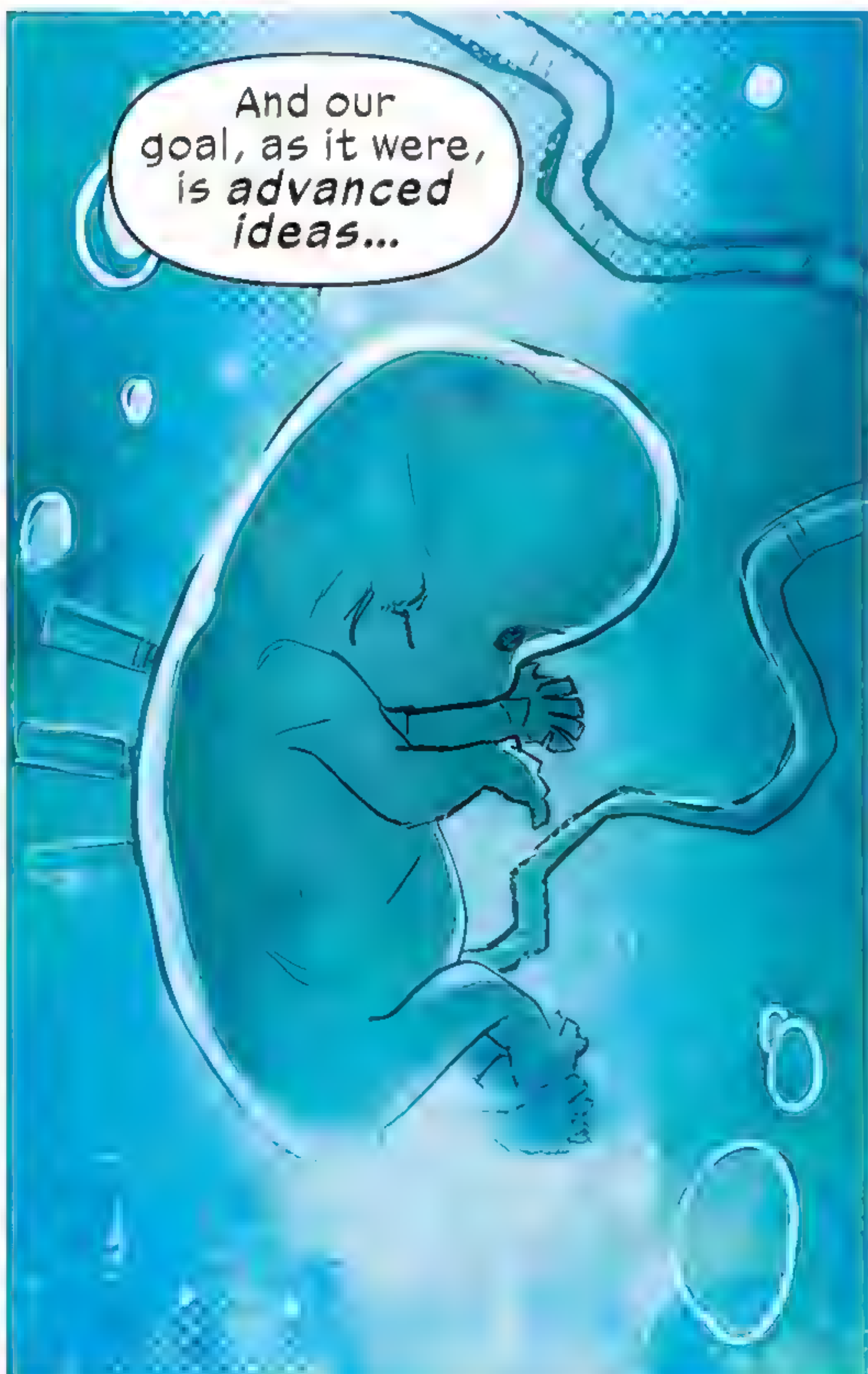
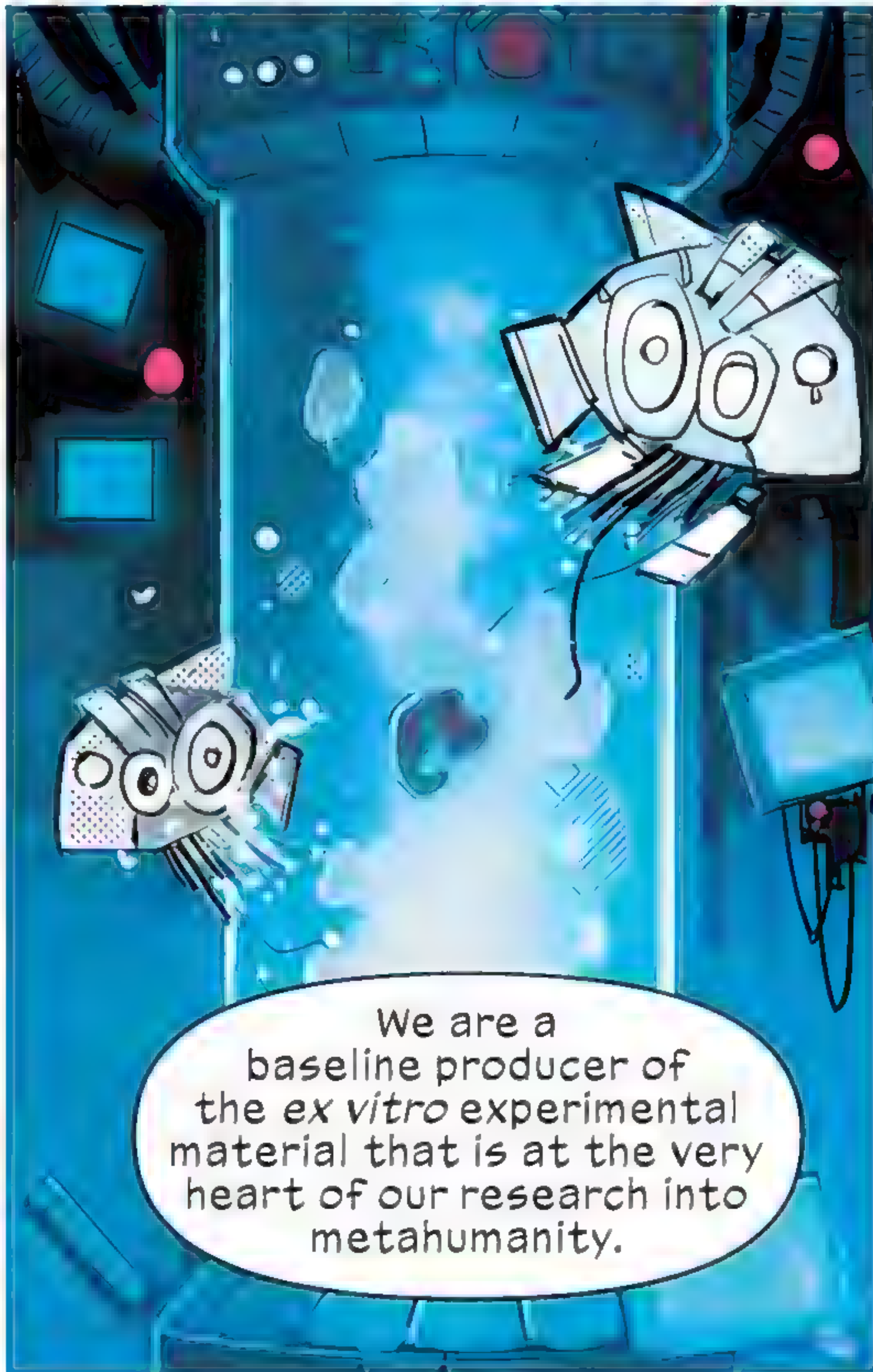
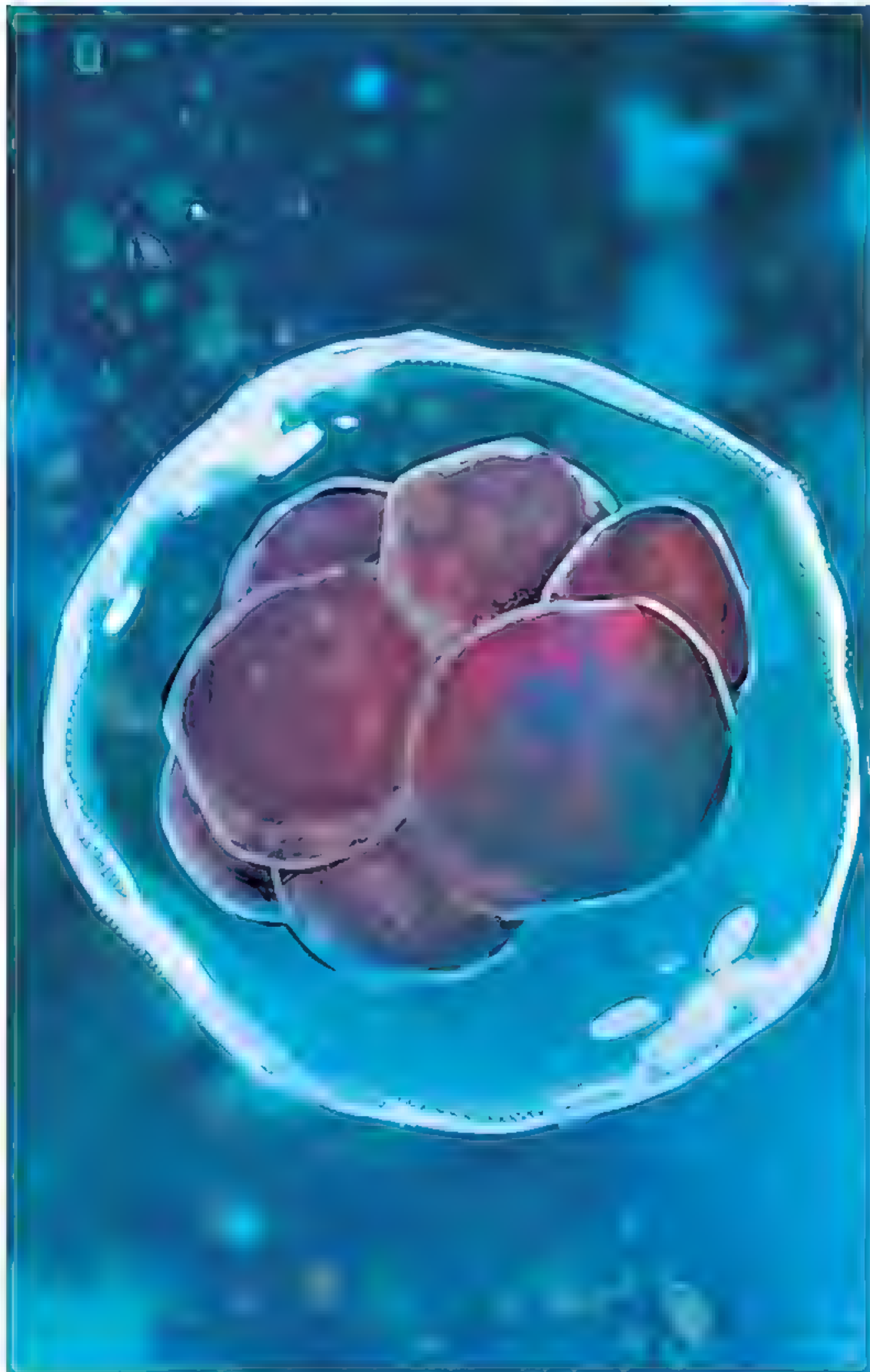
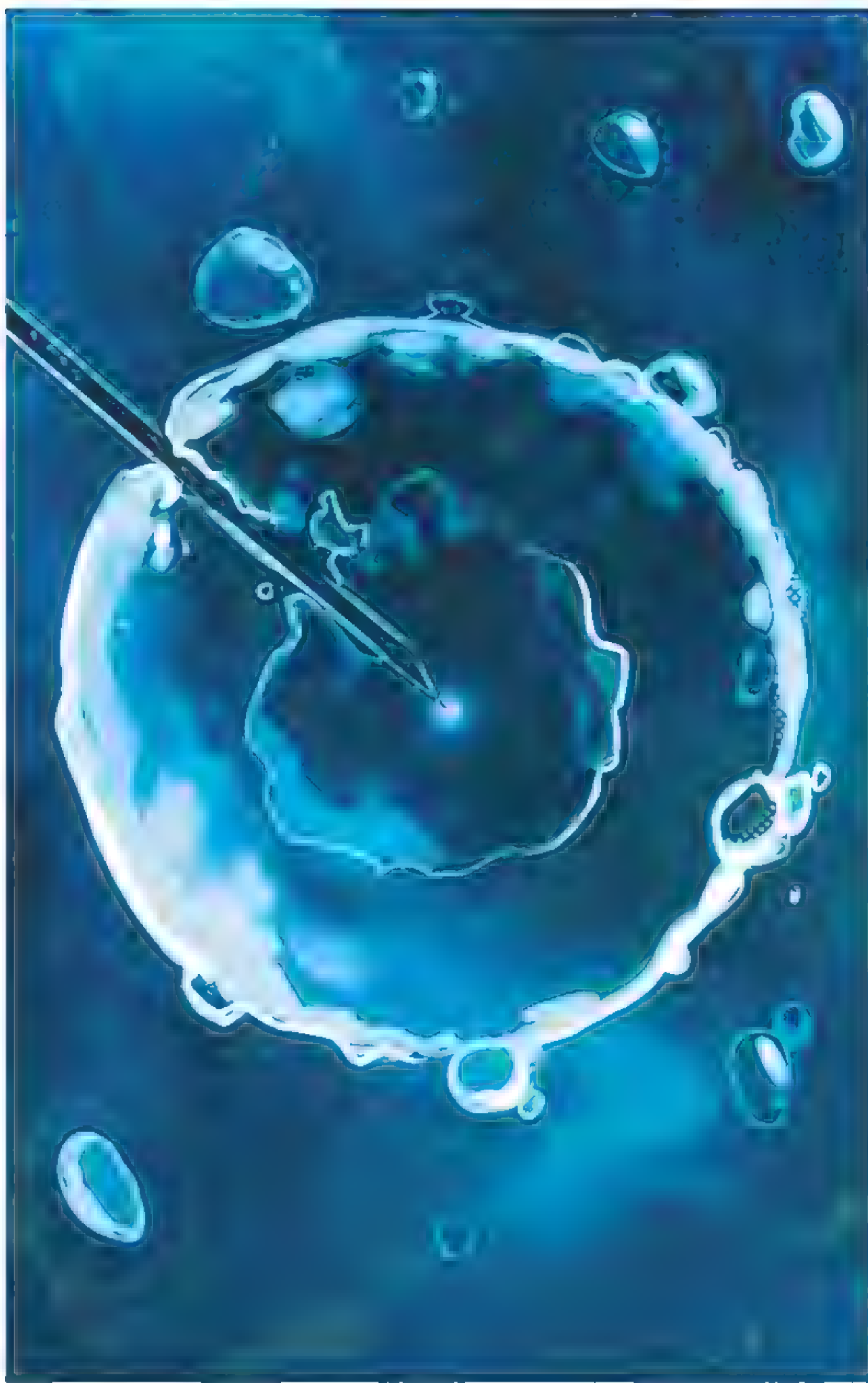
FANTOMEX was created to be a super-soldier against mutantkind and raised in the World, a laboratory whose inhabitants are unmoored from everything outside its walls...including time itself.



Fantomex

[kra_[0.1]...]
[koa_[0.1]...]

[A._New_World]





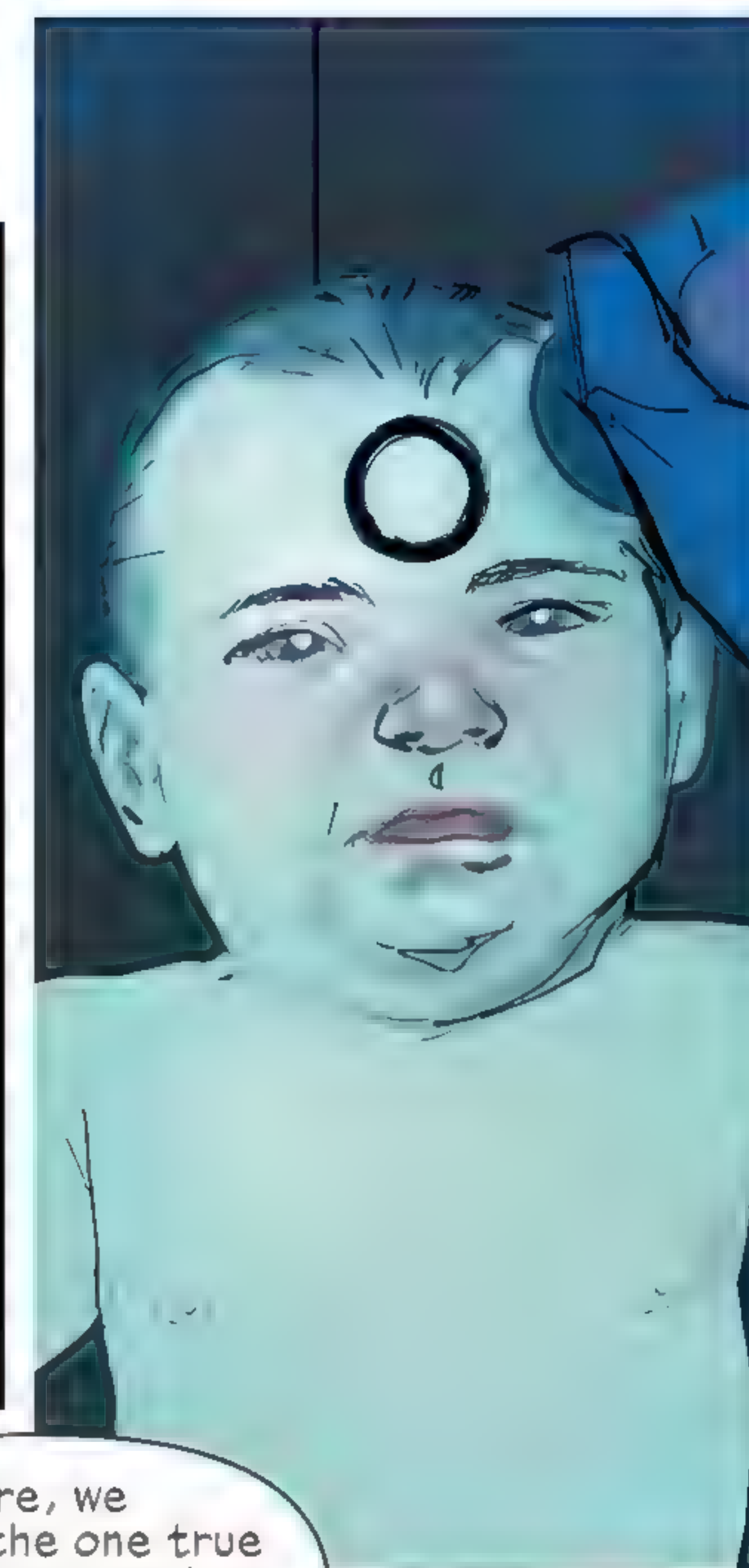
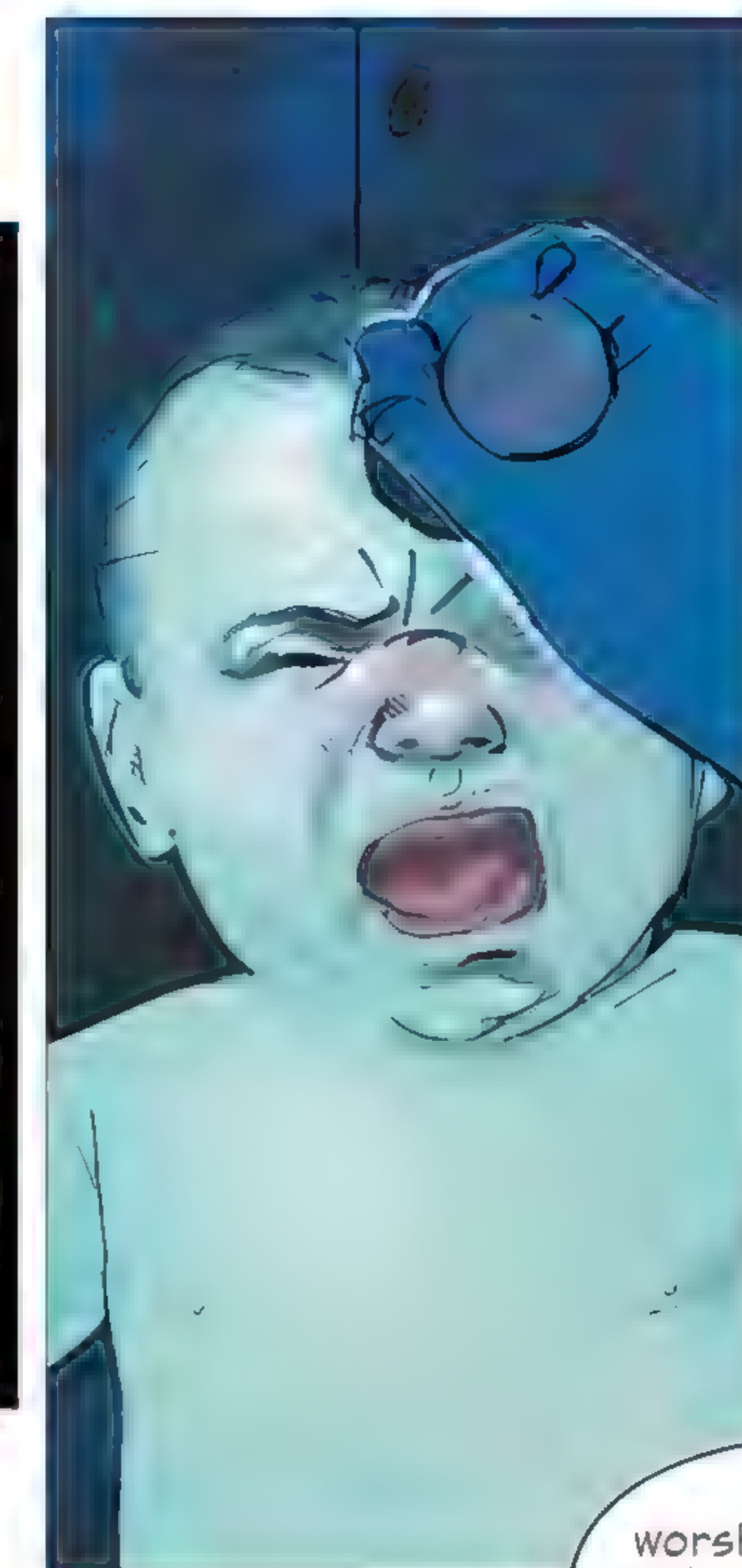
Most people would look around this lab and label our work as inhumane...

But I ask you, who are we to be judged by them? Have you *really* looked at how *most people* live their lives?

The vast majority of them are directionless hypocrites and superstitious cowards. They have no drive. They have no higher purpose.

Well, not us...

We have one rule here: We do not concern ourselves with the wants and whims of... *most people*.



Here, we worship the one true god, *Science*, and our ruthless commitment to her is all that matters.

So... identical clones?

It may appear that way to your virgin eyes, Doctor, but no, not identical--progressive.



Each one, different from the next by one single chromosome. As such, they are perfect experiment stock.



Actually, Doctor, my microspex are showing these two are exactly the same. Perfect copies. Down to the atom.

Not possible.

We have numerous--

Huh. I can't believe it, but I'm reading the same thing. It appears you're right.

What are the odds that when you roll the dice one billion times that Mistress Science gives you thirteen twice?



It's one in one point six six to the quadrillio--

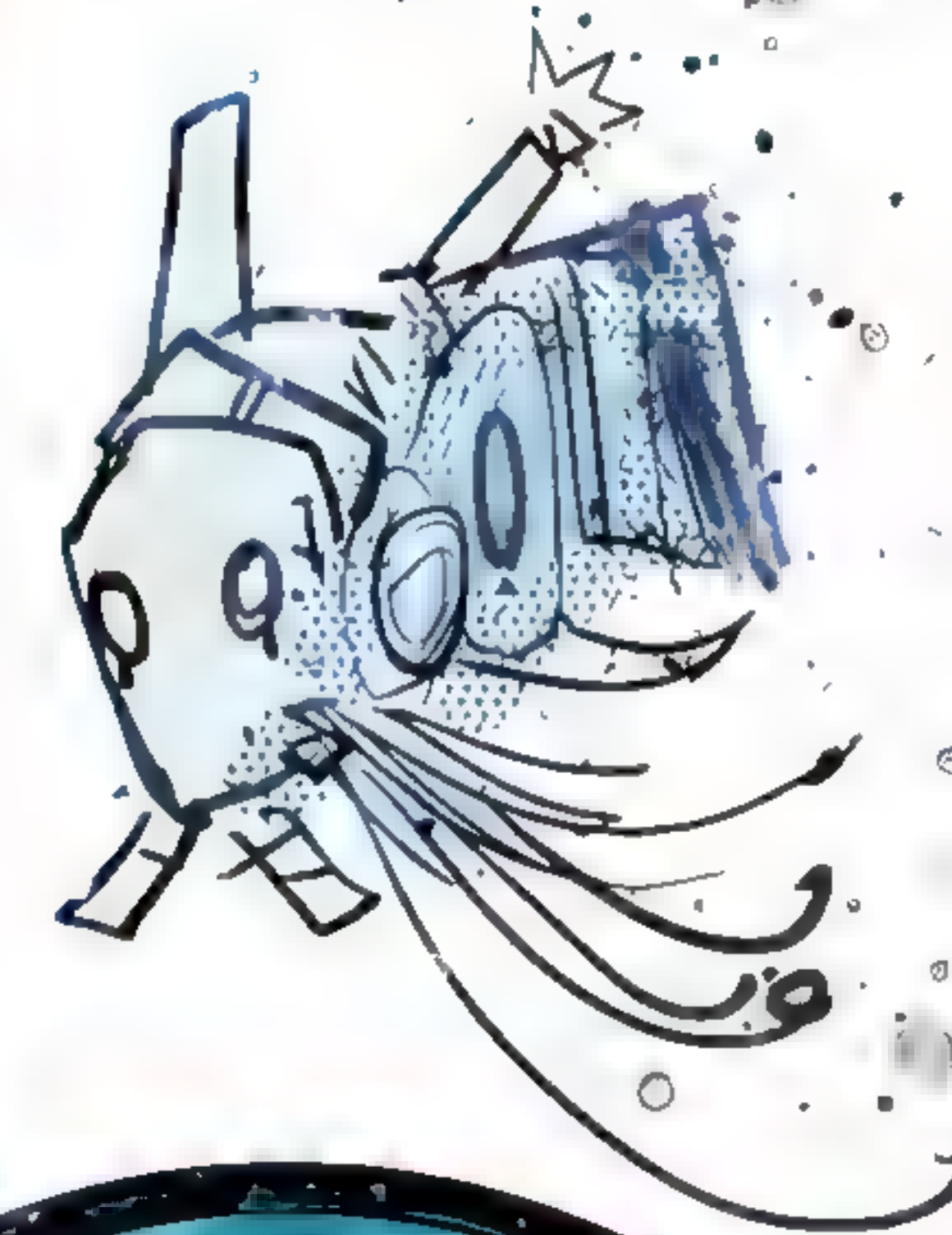
Pfffst!

Well then, rules are rules, and we have no use for anomalies here...



Keep this one.

Throw that one away.





A decade later.



Reconnaissance.
Today, that's the mission.



We go in. We scout the place.
We get out. Any questions?



Yeah, just one. That's a terrible accent. What is that? Belgian?

Pretty sure it's Flemish.

I think it's Swiss.



Flemish is Belgian, you big dummy.



No. Flemish is Dutch.



None of which explains why we're takin' orders from some pastry boy in the middle of monarchy land without a single star or stripe in sight.



We're headed this way, gentlemen...



As for why you're here...that's simple.



You and
your men may
be of some moral
standing, Cap.
Fury...

But many in
your government
are not.



Someone showed
me their belly, and their
greed led to my need and
here you are, as a favor
for a favor...

If it's any
consolation,
I asked for
the best.



Yeah. And
instead you
got us.

What is
this place?



I don't think it has
a formal name, but I hear
some of the men who built
it have taken to calling
it *the World*.



So we just, what, look around... or are you lookin' for somethin' specific?

This is a super-science lab where illegal--and monstrous--research is being done.

I was born here.



This way! Head for cover!



That's funny. It doesn't look Flemish.



I think you mean--

Hold on, you hear that?



Sigh-- Of course it's robots.



HOWLERS-- TAKE THEM DOWN!



Hey, Nick! We gotta get out of here.

Negative.

Mission's done when the mission's done, soldier.



Actually, Captain, you and your men have done enough by drawing their attention.

You head back to the exit.

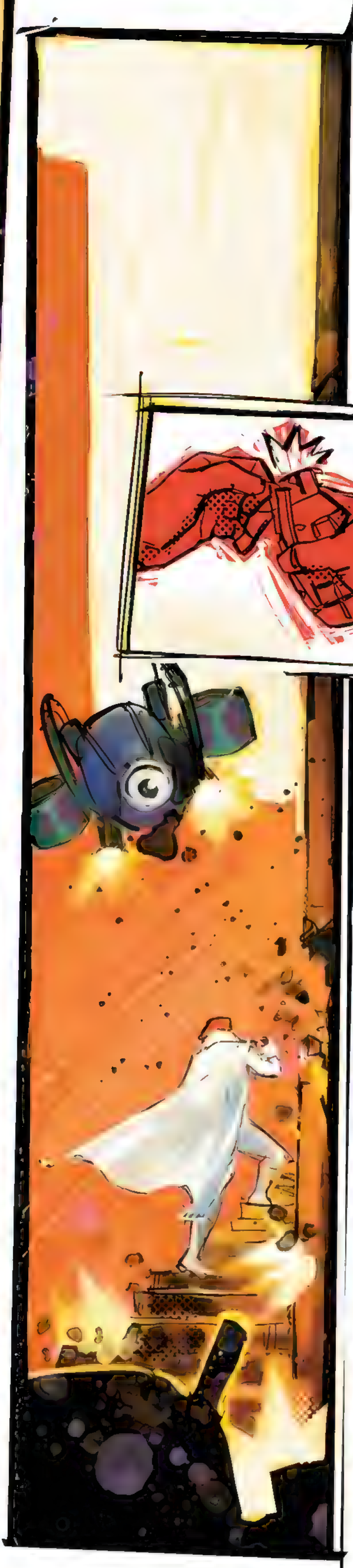
And where are you headed?



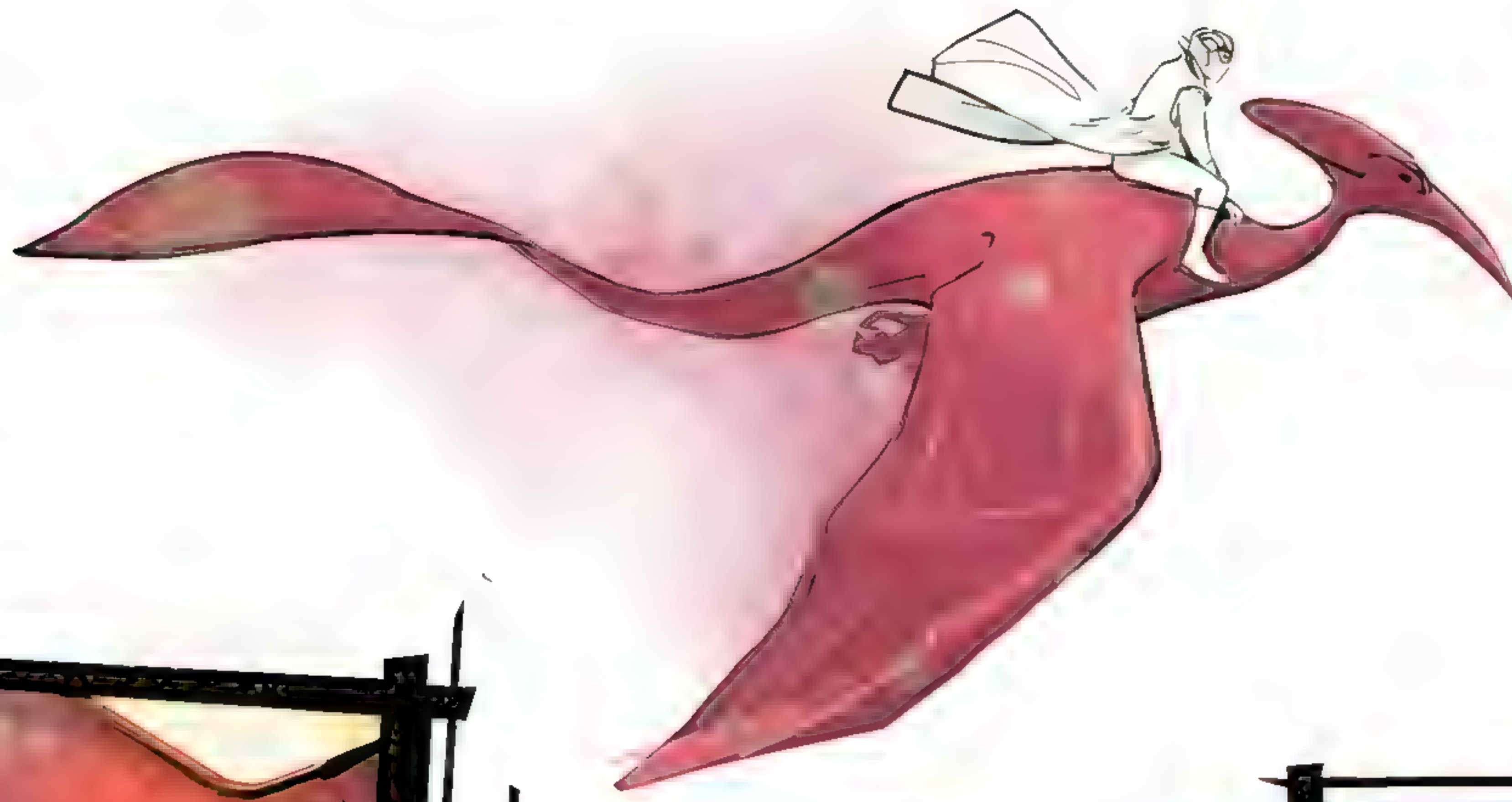
Where do you think, captain?



"Deeper into the World, of course."



Ah!
There you
are!



Alarming
that the World
spins against its axis
when starting
up...



A little
retrograde before
propelling itself
forward...

And you,
still a boy.
Unnerving.



Sorry.

You
okay?

Yes.



Do you
want to
leave?



...
Not
yet.



"...so that we might have our way with it."

Hmmmm.

Yes, quite threatening. Foreboding. Terrifying.

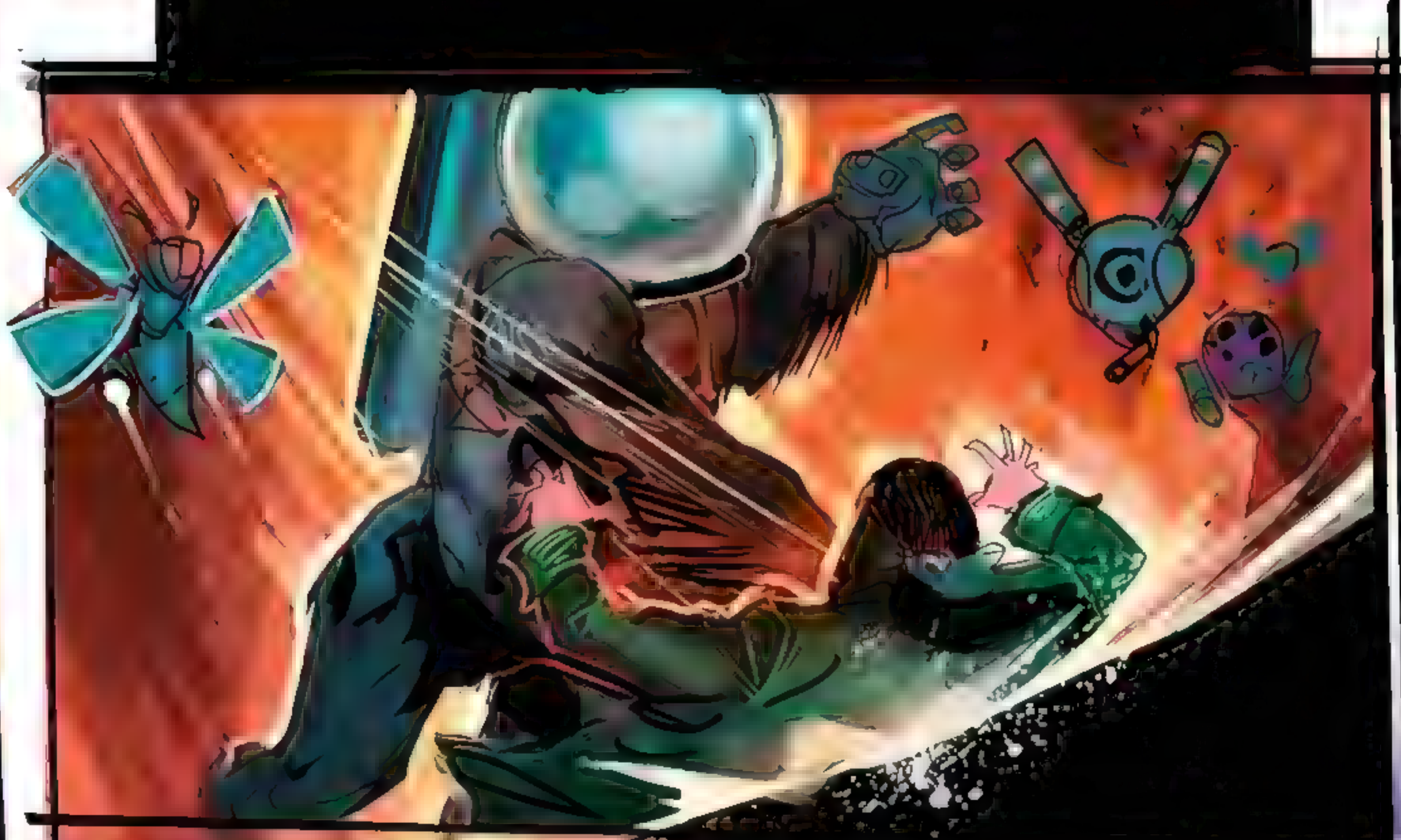
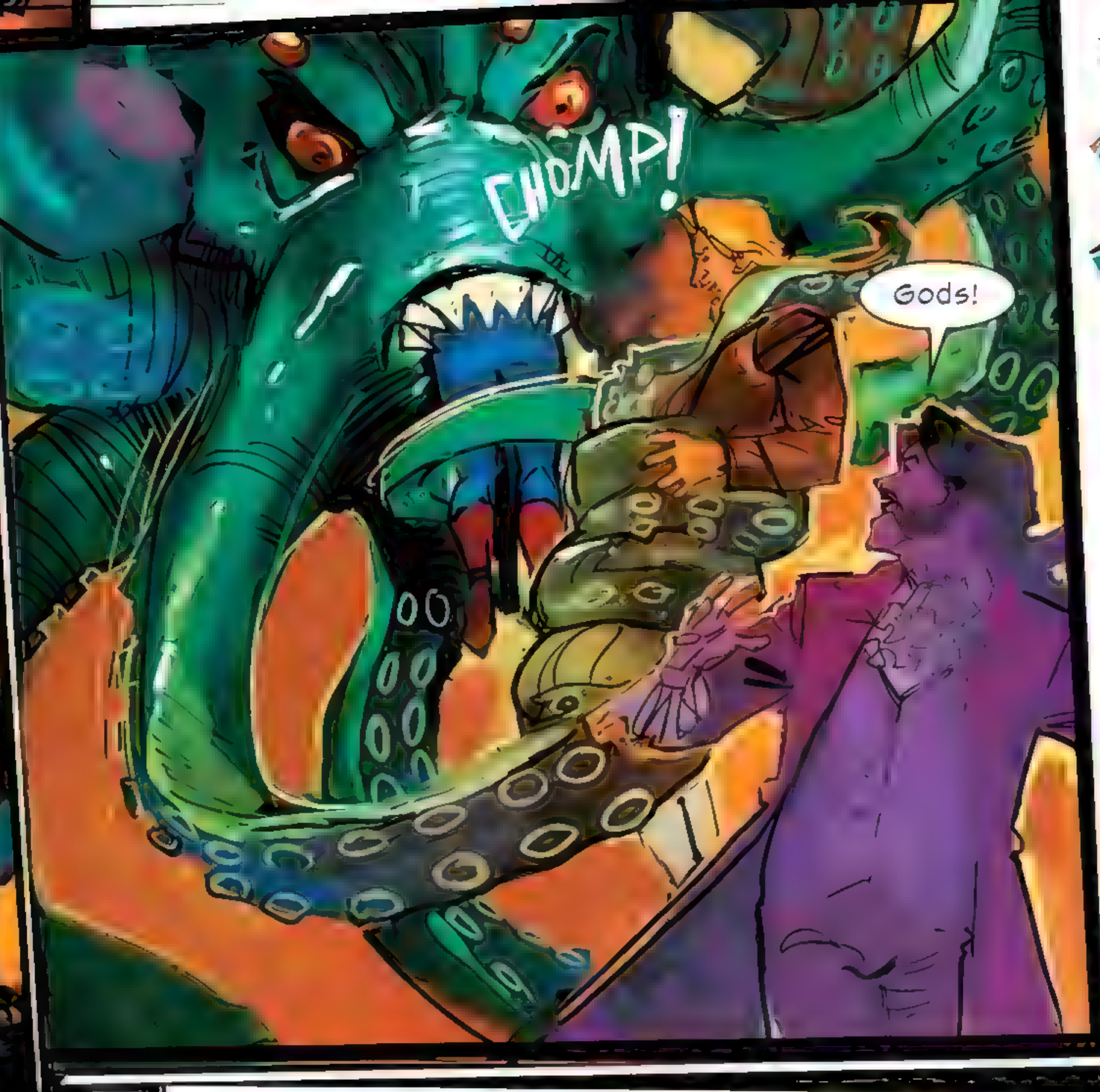
I may never sleep again.

Really, why again was there a need for our being here?

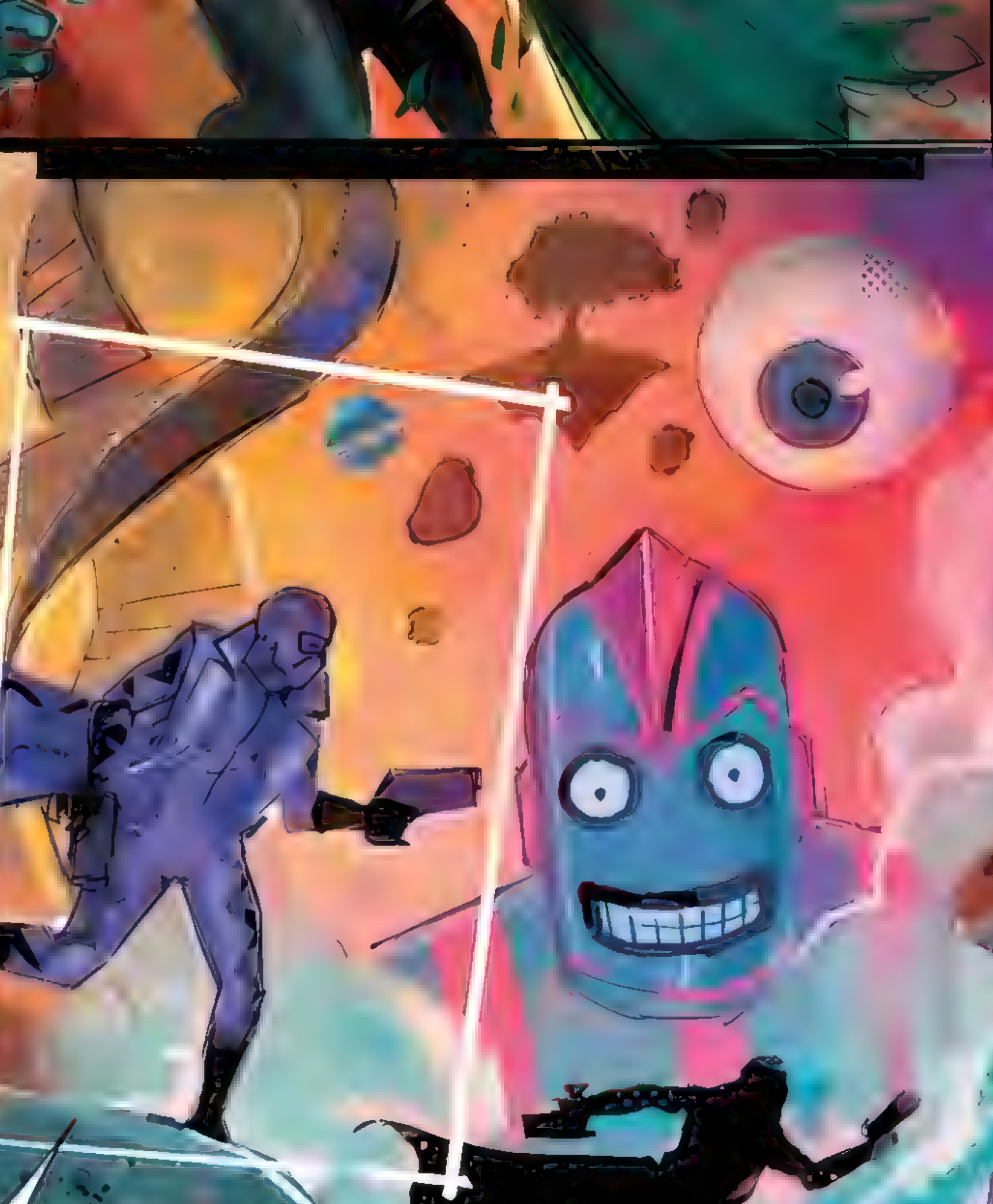
Not that I mind, but this feels like *found money*.

Give it a minute.

BOOM



We've been over this...
It's not Hell...it's the World.



Shaw! This is foolish. I'm leaving! Now!



Dammit! I'll remember this... I promise you.

And I promise you, we had a deal... and I expect you to live up to it.

Oh...?

And best of luck finding your way out.



How you
doing?
I'm
fine.







The following decade.

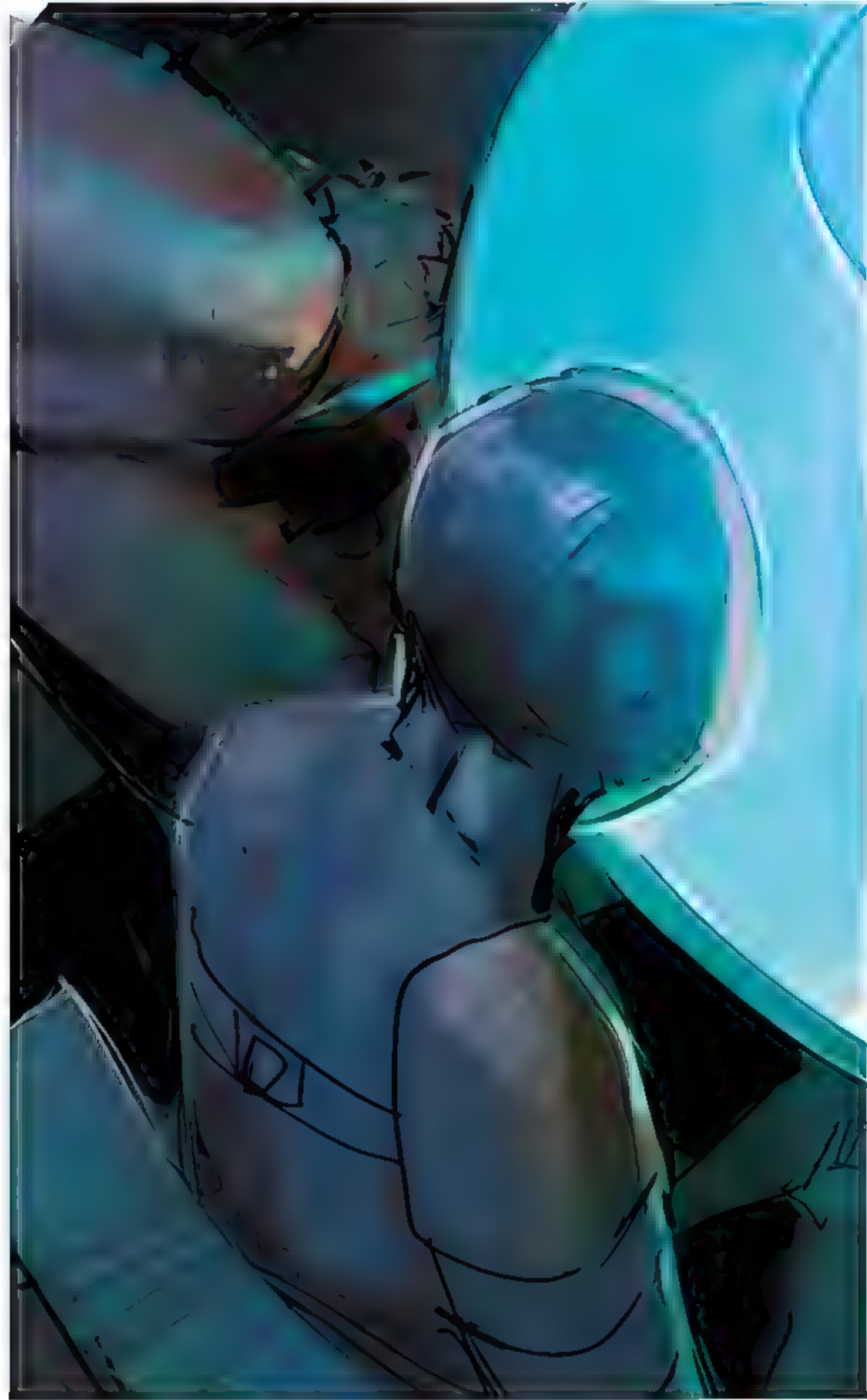
I'm going back.

And I know your first question: *Why now?*



Actually, I was wondering why *us*?

Yes. Of course.



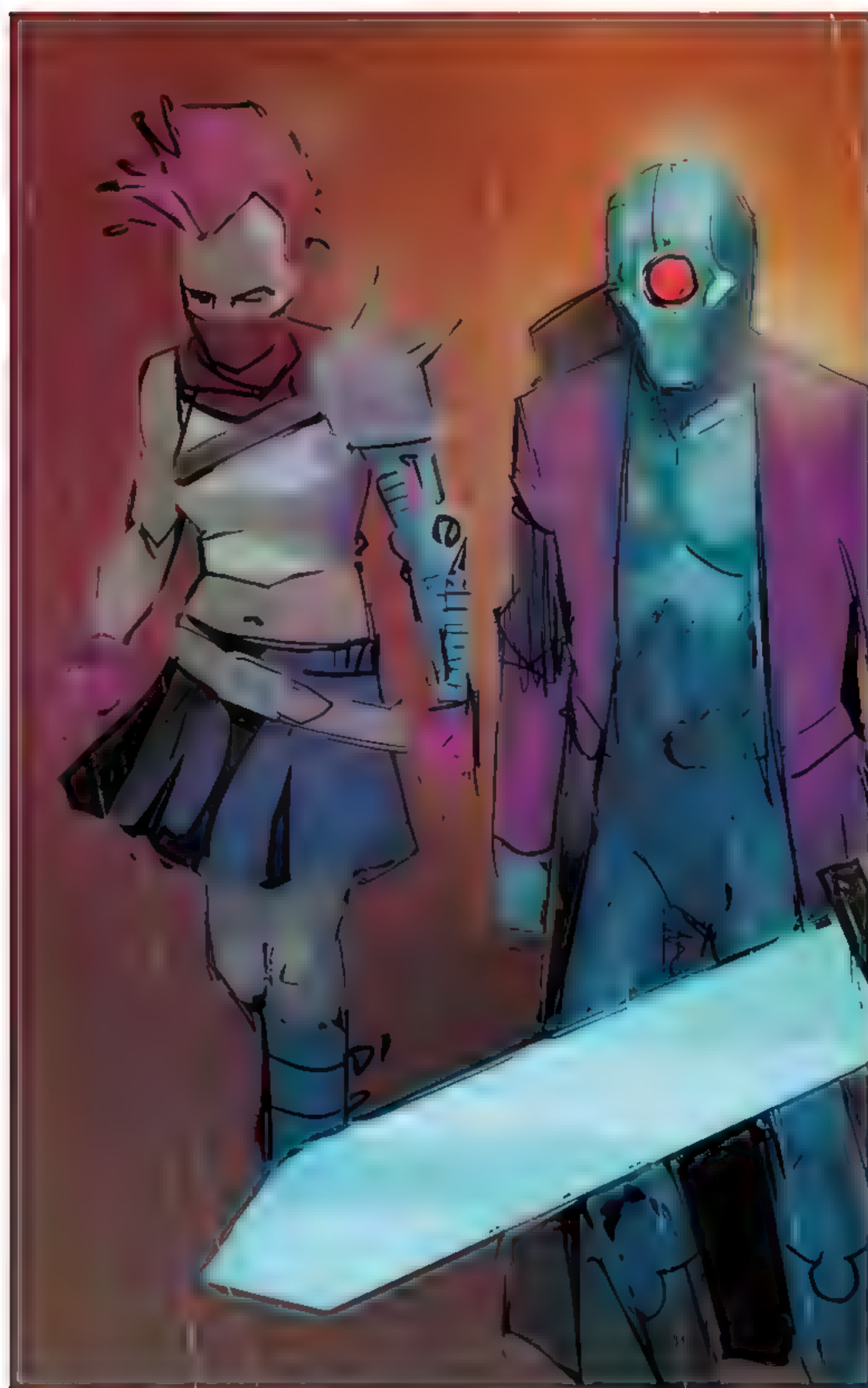
Why you? Well, first I went to the Avengers, but I looked around the room and saw a collection of has-beens and pretenders and thought to myself...

Not good enough.

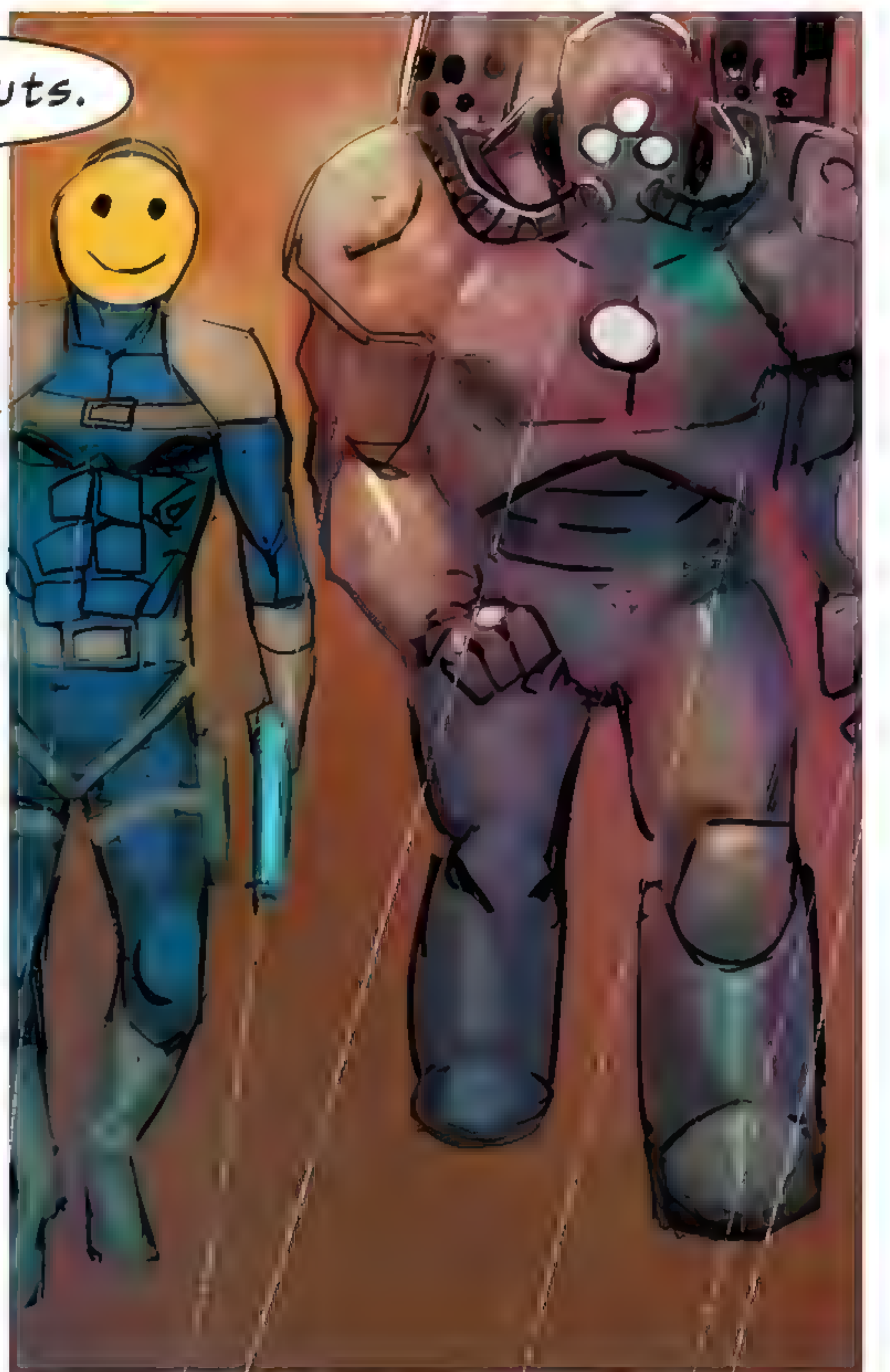
After that, I went to the Defenders, and the Champions...even the Thunderbolts...

And in each one, I saw no one of *quality*.

So I came to you:



The Humonganauts.





Red Eye...

Emotipool...



Rustbot...

And Mohawk Person...



CLICK!



You are
the best...



The best your
generation has
to offer...



And the
perfect bait
necessary if we're
going to pull off
this rescue
mission...



So
we're going
in there...



The
World.



And I want you to know that I couldn't be prouder to be Fighting alongside all of you.

Wait a second... Did you say "bait"?

I don't think so. You must have misheard me.

Zoiks!

It seems we were expected...

Hello. Uh, we come in peace.

Organisms! Sterile environment breached! World under threat!

That's new.

You bastard! You knew this was going to happen!

No. This is definitely not what I was expecting to happen.

Yes, you probably were never going to survive...

AAIIIEEEEE!

AAIIIEEEEE!

AAIIIEEEE!

"But I was absolutely expecting to make it past the front door."



I wonder how...



I think we're the same. That's how.



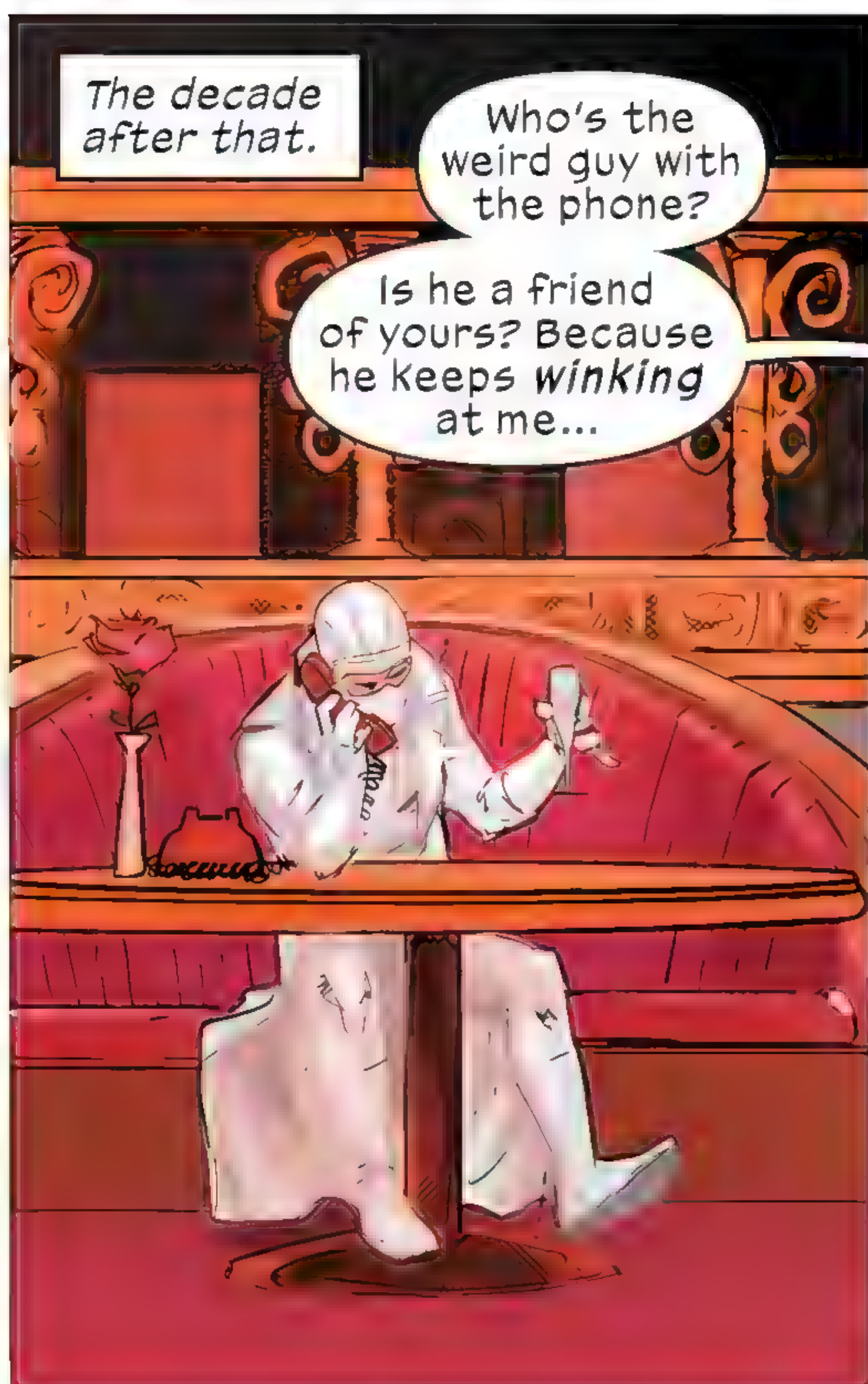
You're like a memory of a time long lost. Something I saw out of the corner my eye a hundred years ago.

I see you now, but why can't you see?



We're building something here. It cannot be stopped.





The decade after that.

Who's the weird guy with the phone?

Is he a friend of yours? Because he keeps *winking* at me...



I'd like to order some medicine...

...for headaches...Tylenol... whatever...

Only one of these idiots has a healing factor.



He calls himself *Fantomex*.

My contact.

I'm going with him to find out who I *am*, where I *came from*.



Forget it, Logan.

I'm so sick of having "*missions*" and trying to be some kind of perfect mutant soldier-teacher or whatever it is we are today...



Some drinker.



This guy's one of the best.

Trust me, Fantomex, it's like I promised...

...there's nobody I'd rather have in my corner than *Scott Summers*.



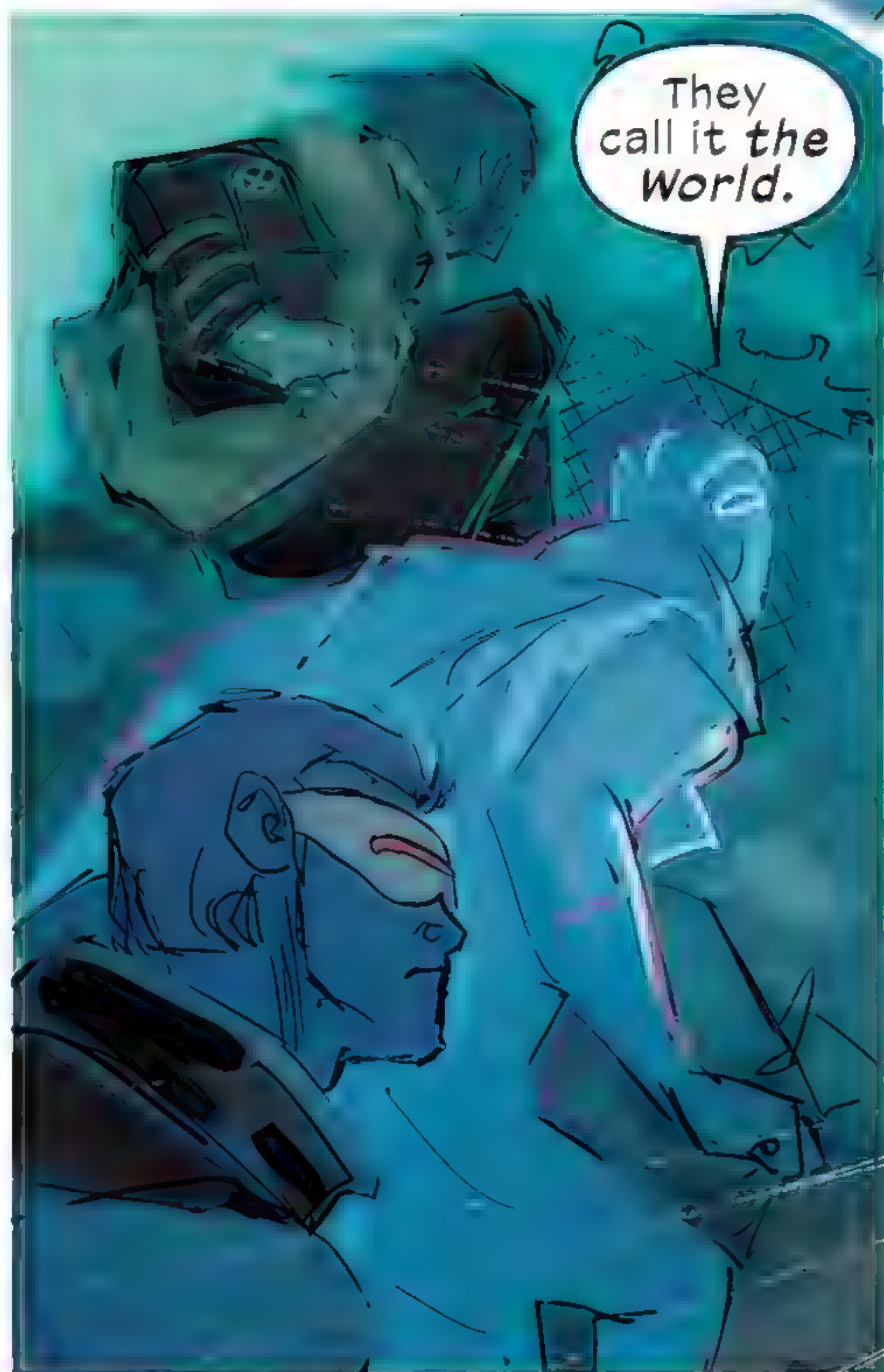
So...



"What's the name of this place again?"

It's a square mile of experimental *micro-reality* with its own culture, its own religion, its own *history*...a giant *petri dish* where the lives of unsuspecting humans are *used up* in days, even *moments*.

A torture chamber.



They call it *the World*.



Here my mother was mated with machines and I was *bred*, gentlemen.



Let us now return to the womb.



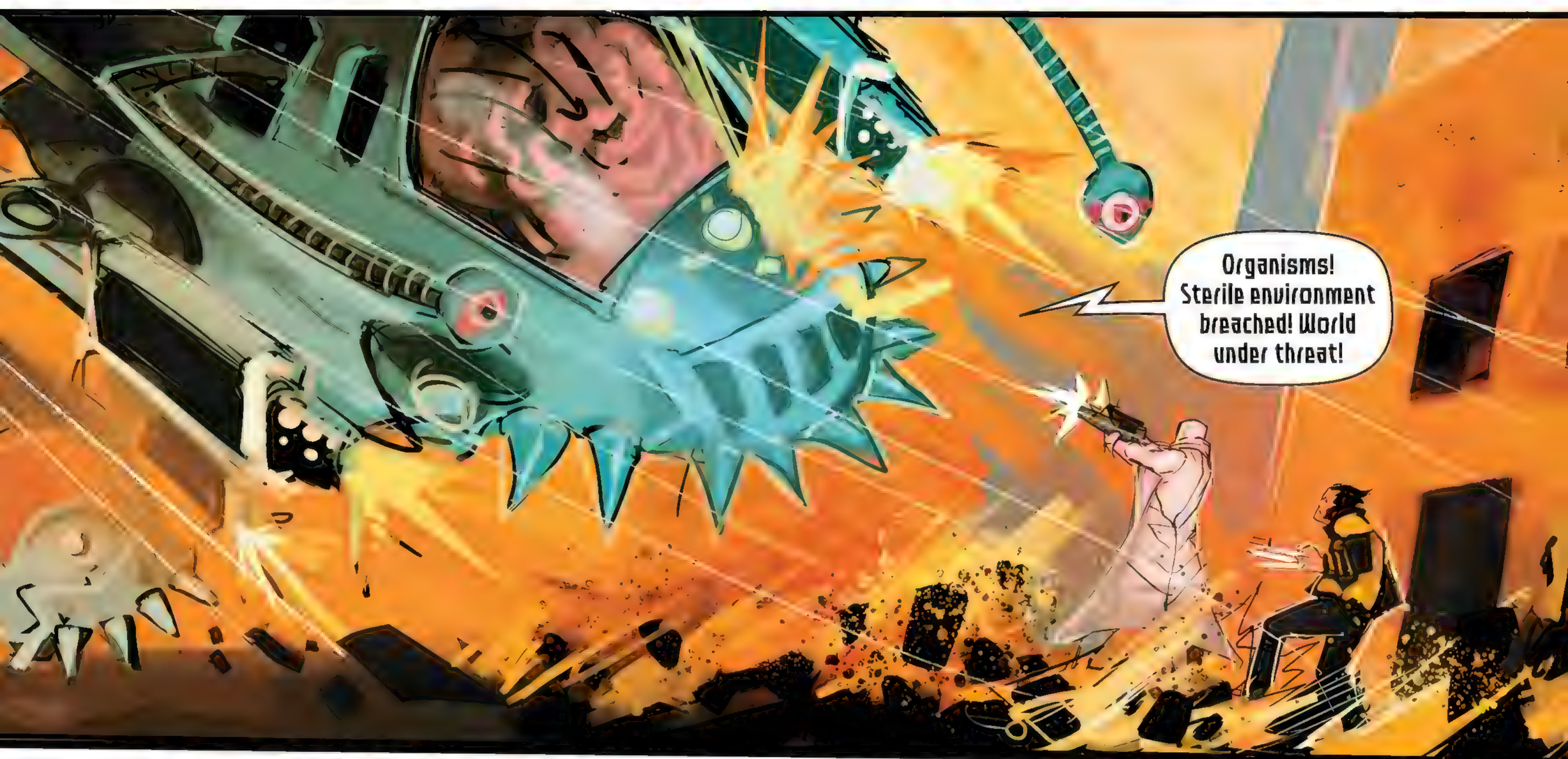


This is the smell of old sins revisited.



Of claims being made on what was wrought.

!!!



Organisms! Sterile environment breached! World under threat!



Fantomex!
Where are you--



Oh!

Can you feel it?
This experiment--
this society--
is coming to an end.



I built the World, but look...

I have broken the World.

Do I build
a *new* prison
here in the
ruins...

...or
dare go
beyond?

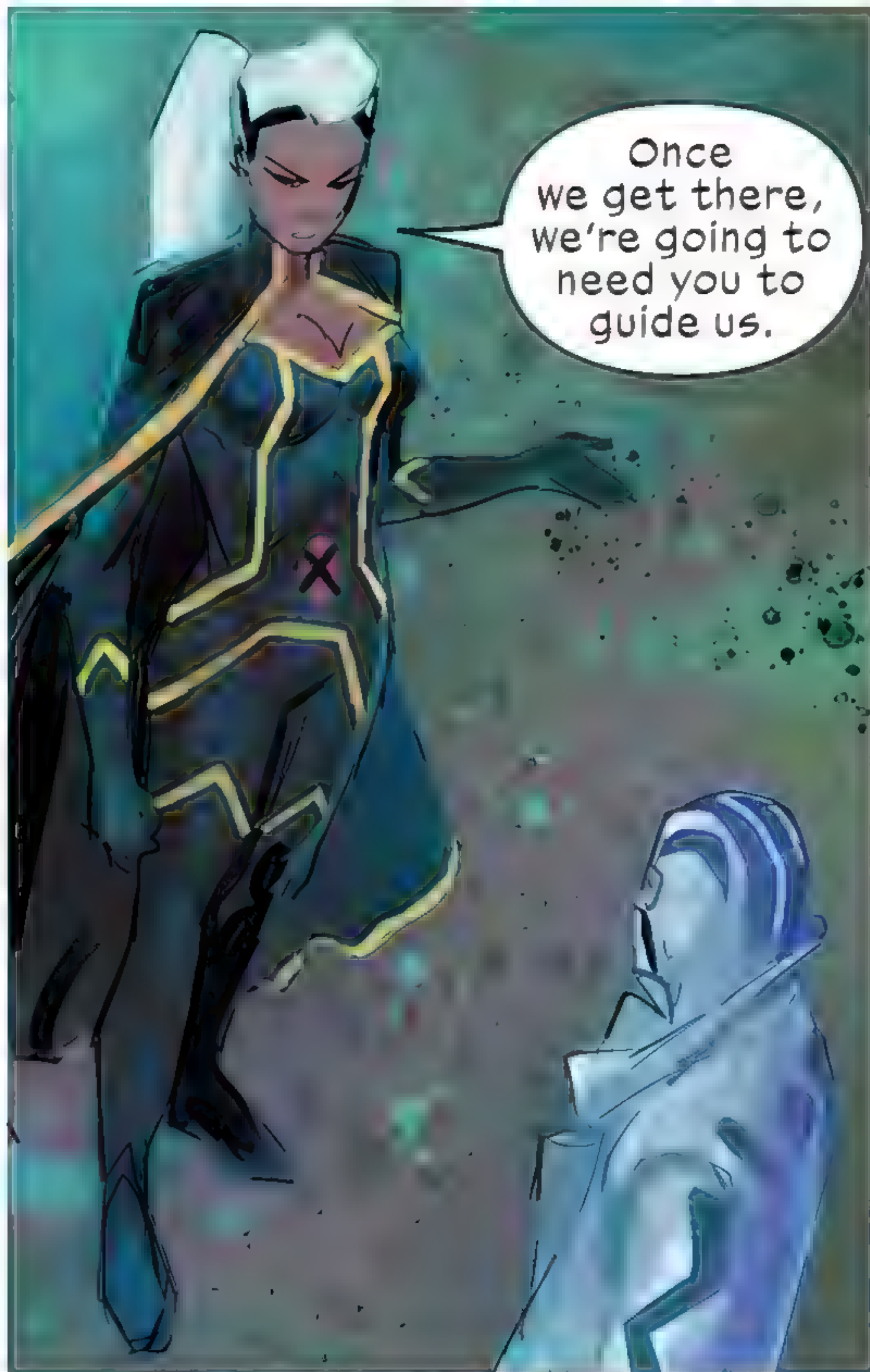
I remember
the idea of you.
Like a cave painting
from a thousand
years ago.

Some
primal direction
of man.

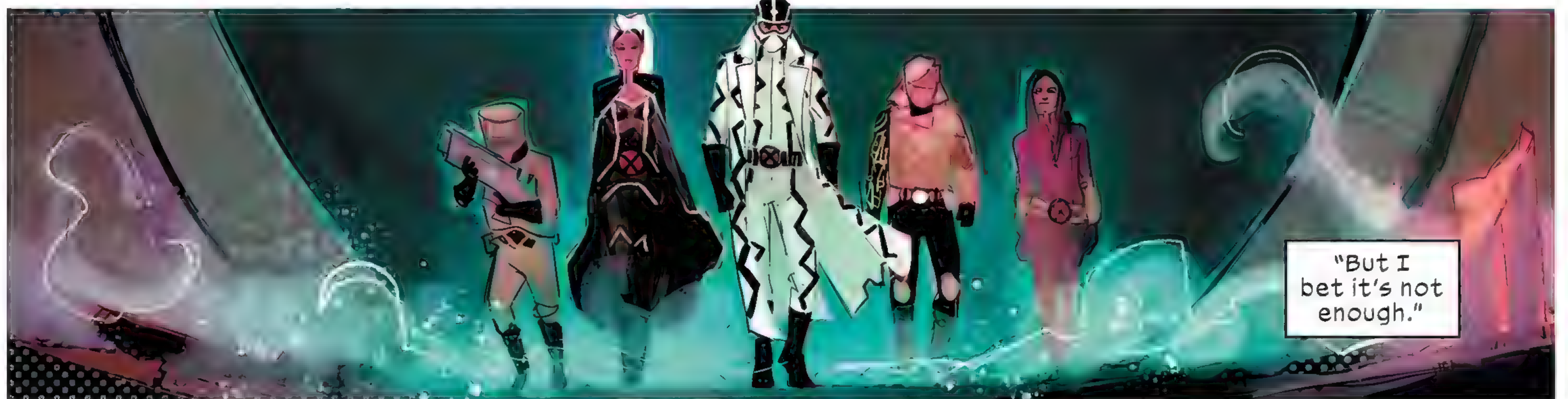
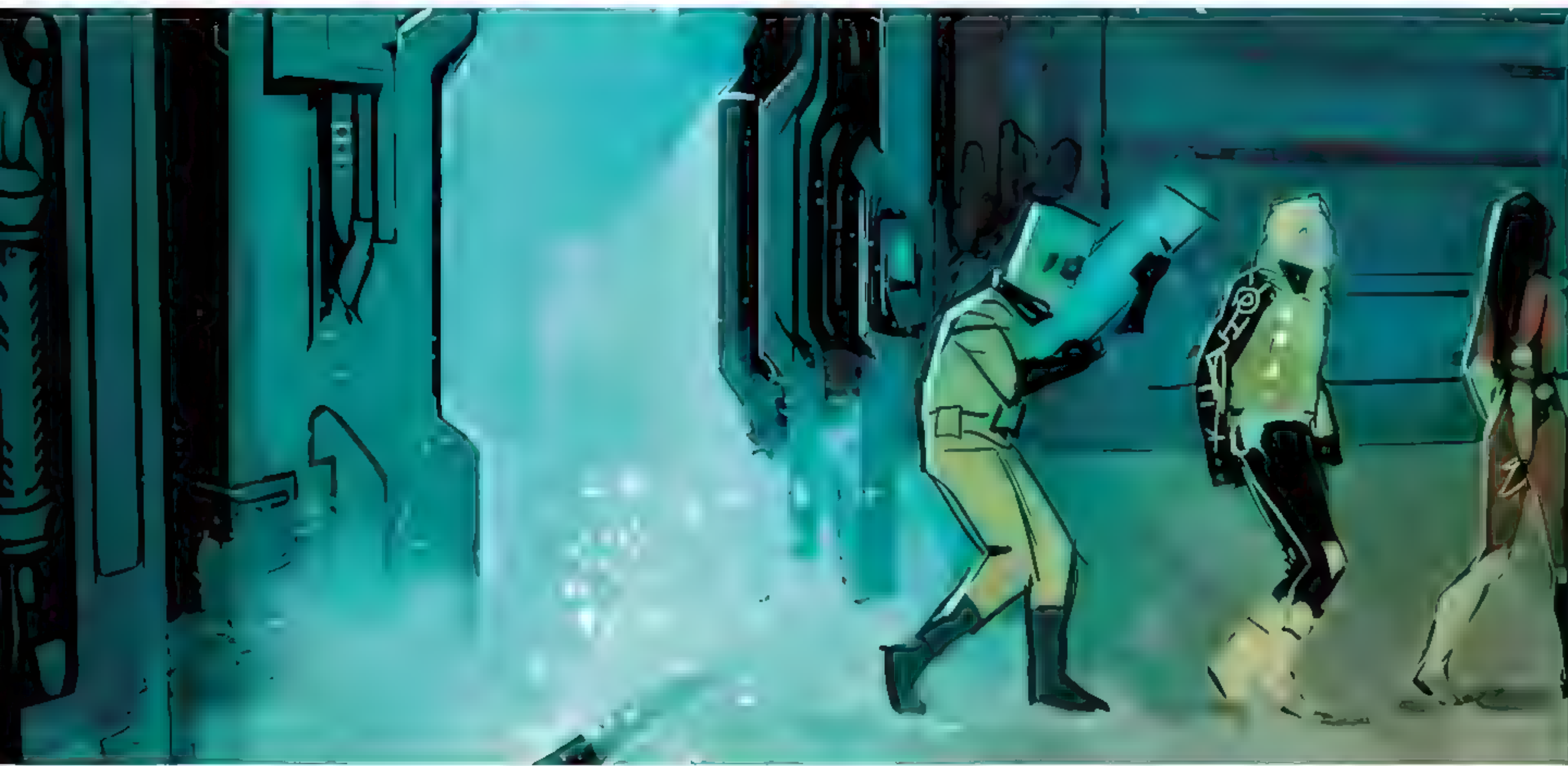
Some
primal direction
of me.

Are you
real?













Disintegration

16

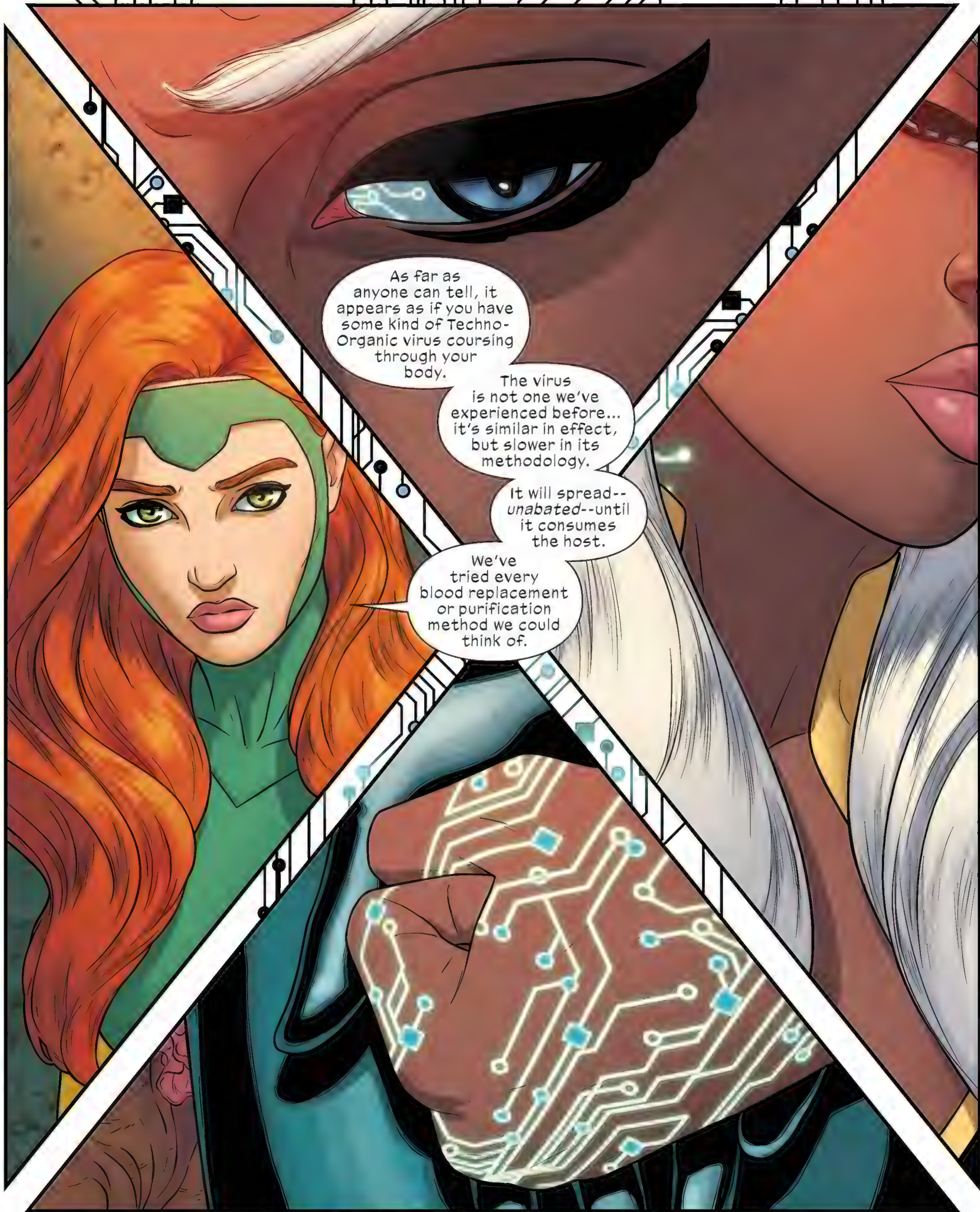
Then.

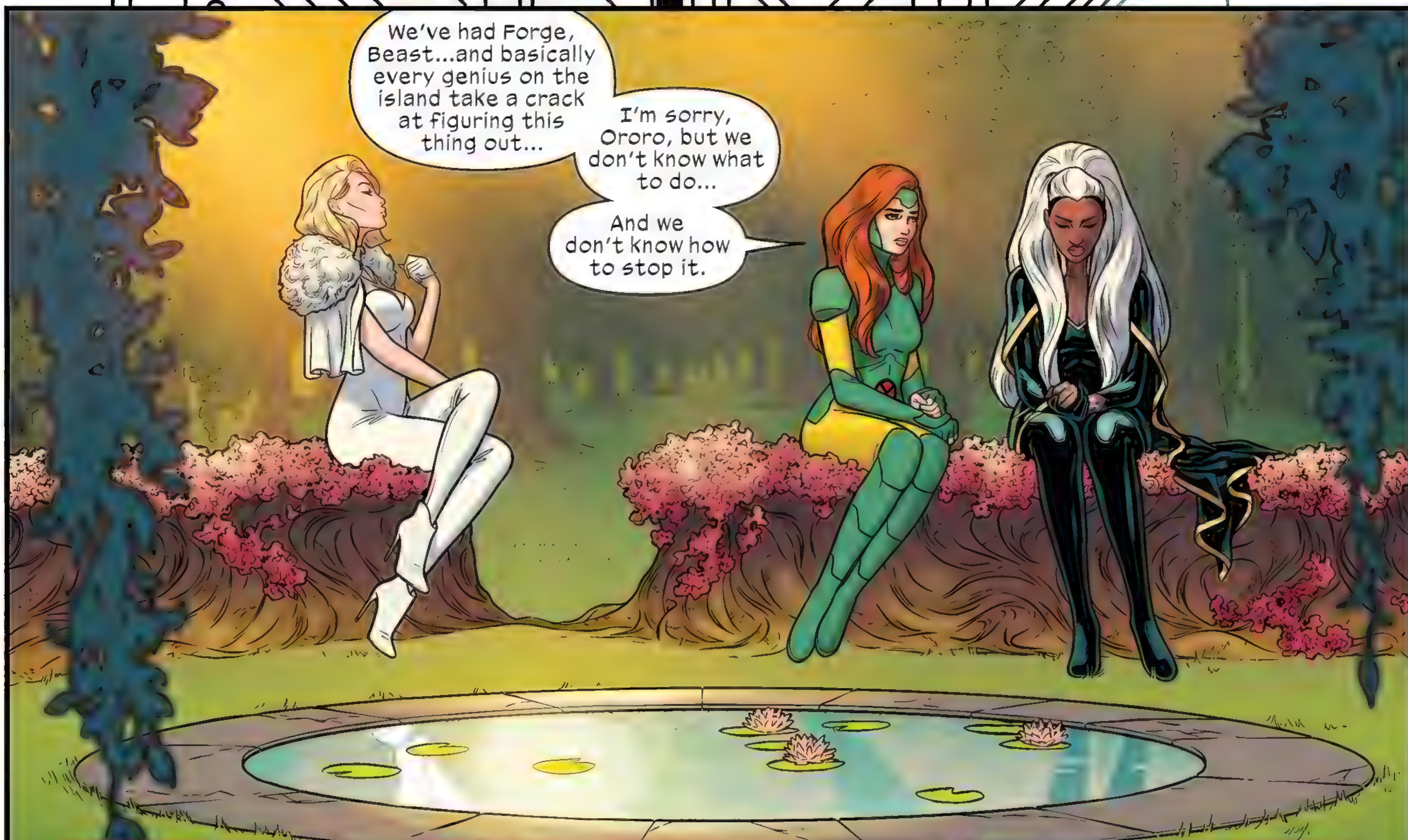
As far as anyone can tell, it appears as if you have some kind of Techno-Organic virus coursing through your body.

The virus is not one we've experienced before... it's similar in effect, but slower in its methodology.

It will spread--*unabated*--until it consumes the host.

We've tried every blood replacement or purification method we could think of.





We've had Forge, Beast...and basically every genius on the island take a crack at figuring this thing out...

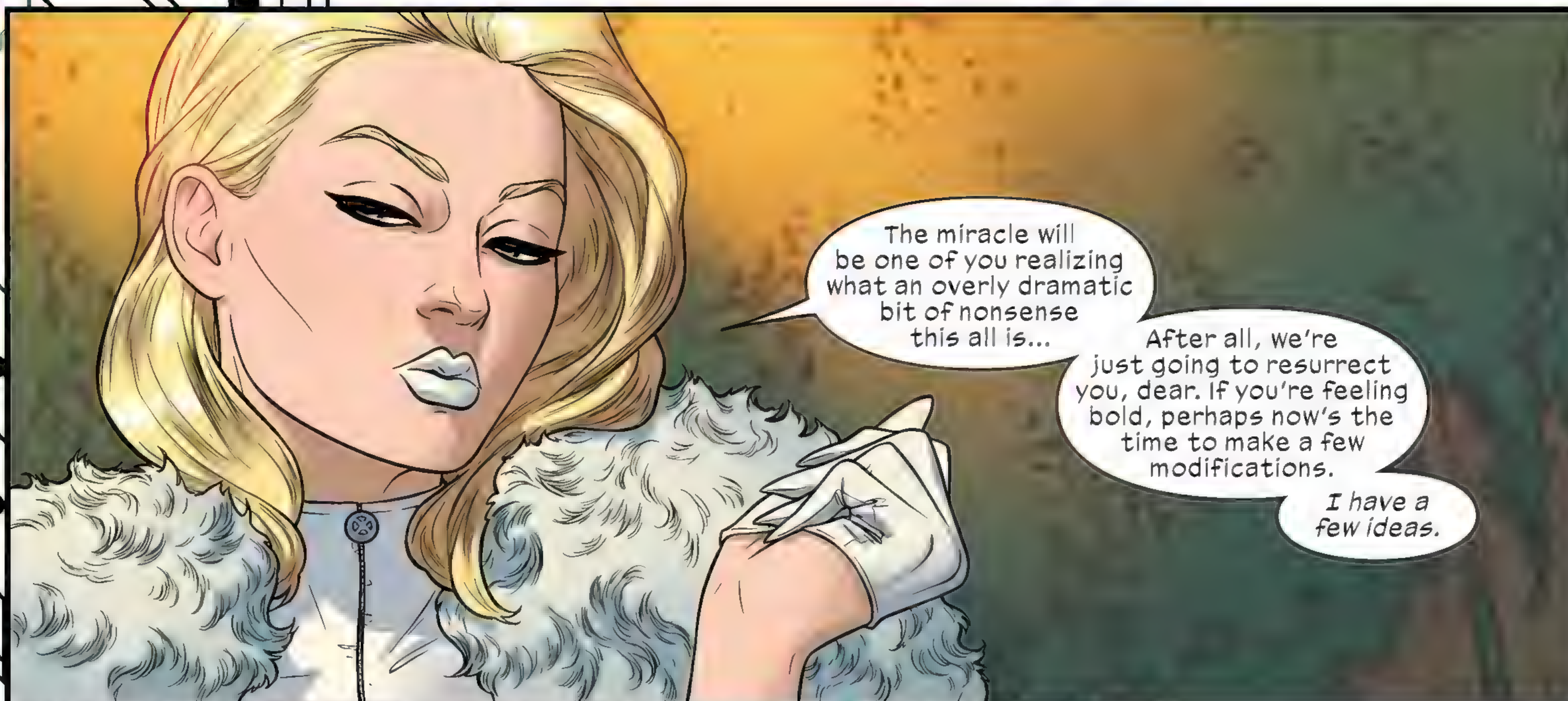
I'm sorry, Ororo, but we don't know what to do...
And we don't know how to stop it.



I'm sure you did your best, Jean... I'm sure everyone did.



I suppose all there is to do now is wait and hope for a miracle.



The miracle will be one of you realizing what an overly dramatic bit of nonsense this all is...

After all, we're just going to resurrect you, dear. If you're feeling bold, perhaps now's the time to make a few modifications.

I have a few ideas.



Emma. What the he--

No. It's fine. *Let her talk.*



She's so very good at talking.

Thank you. I often feel an underappreci--

Excuse me.



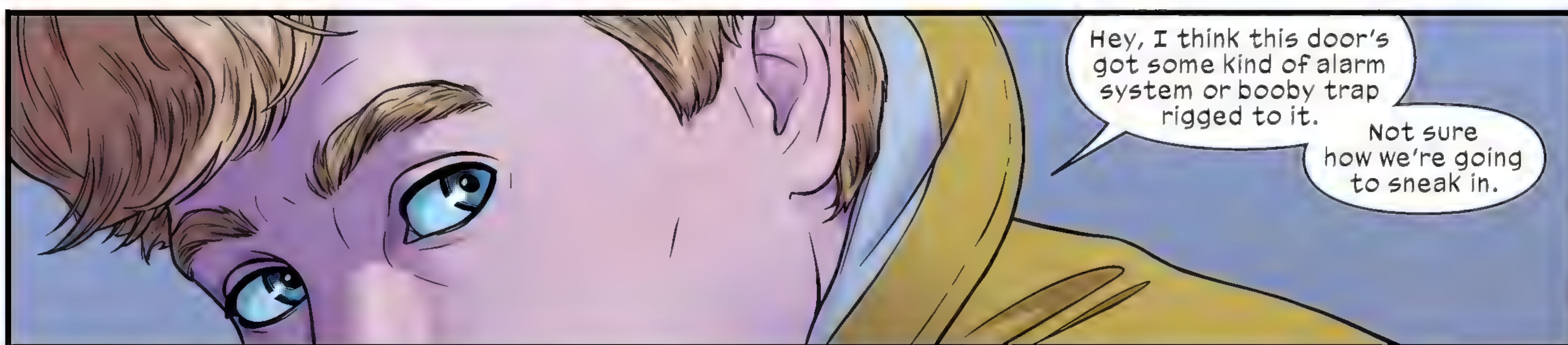
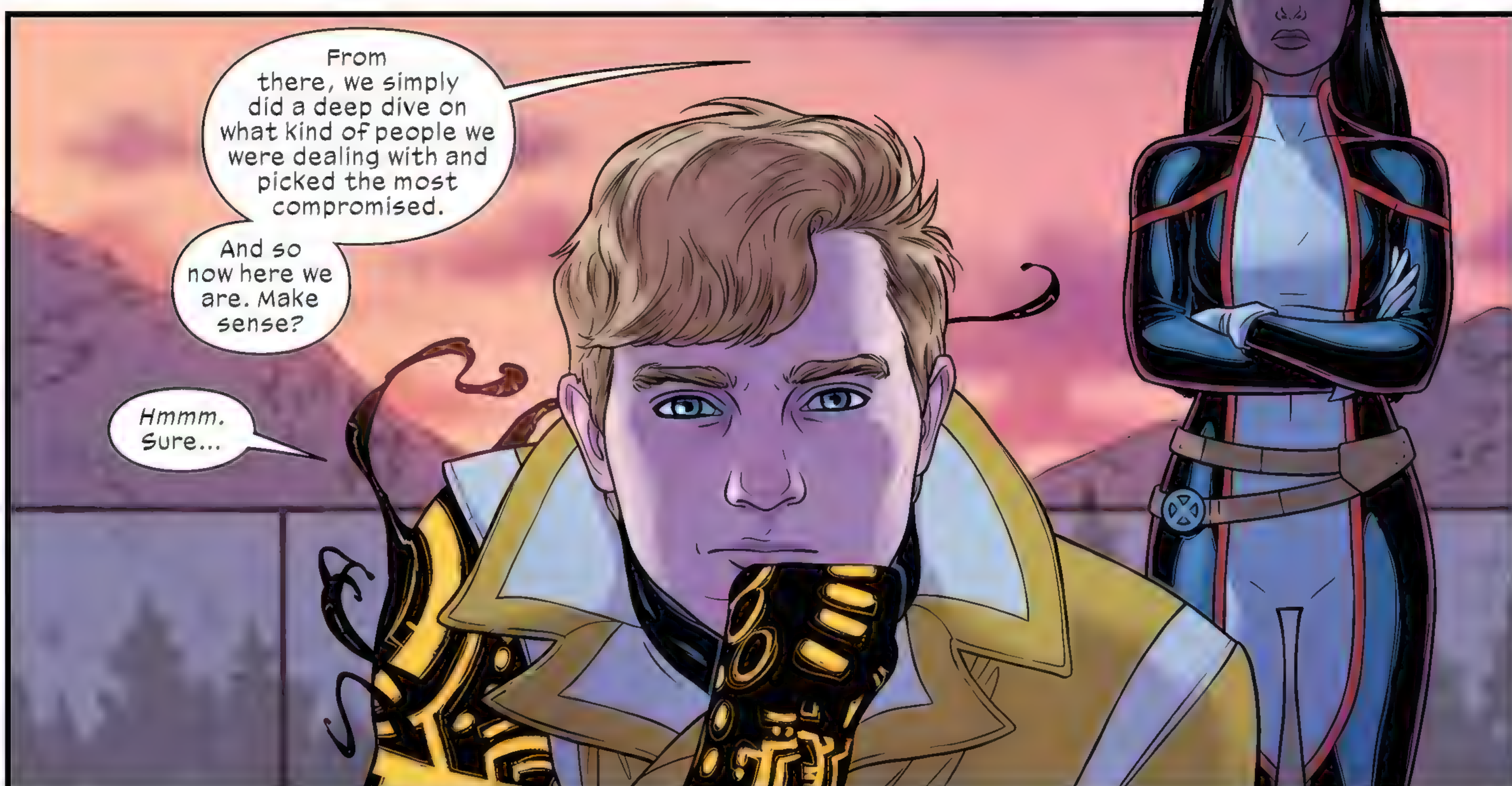
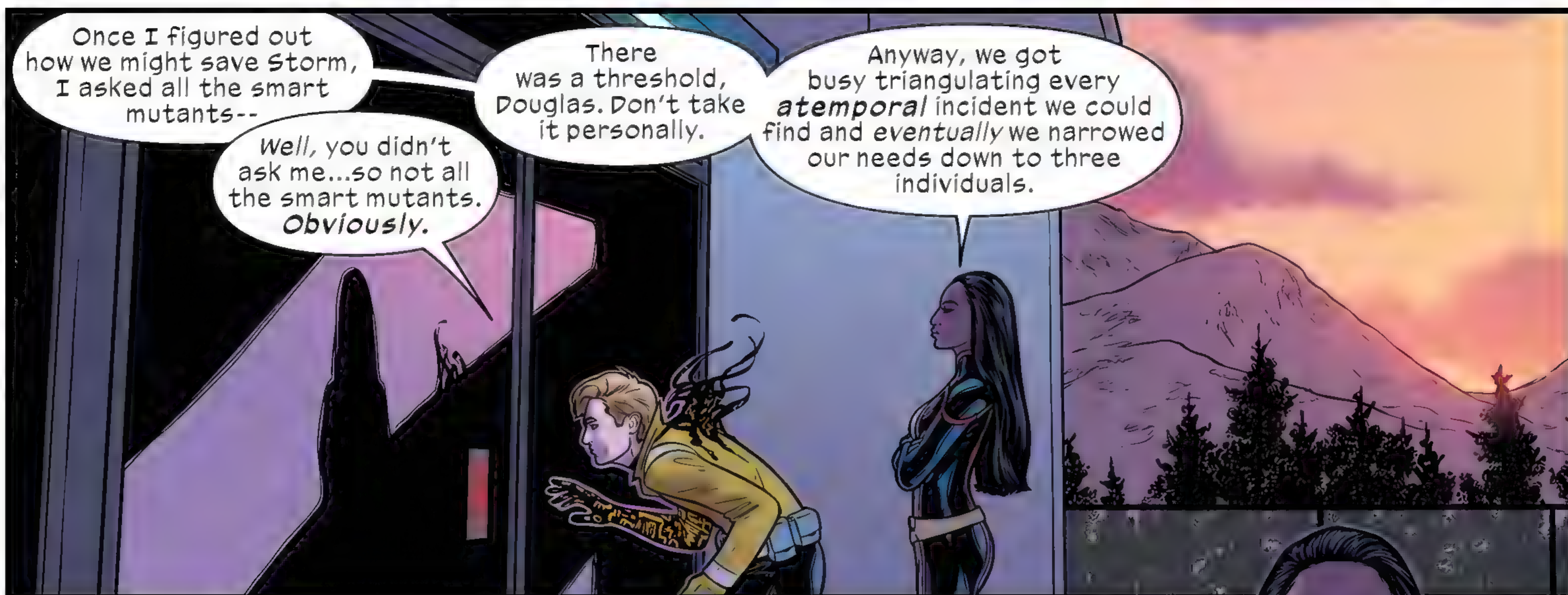
Sorry to interrupt...

But I looked at Storm's medical results and...*I think I know how to save you.*

Later.

Okay...
so how do
we find this
guy?

Well, what
we're looking for is
temporal phenomena--
anomalies, really--so that
we can track a specific kind
of person who does a
specific kind of
job.





I was wondering when you were going to show up, man...but there's no need to be so aggro with my do--

Hey! Hold on a second...

You are not who I was expecting. Who are you?

Here's a better question:

Who were you expecting... and why?

Here's an even better question:

Do you really just hang out all day wearing that getup? Doesn't seem practical.



Well, I'm a professional. I can't sit around in my pajamas all day, can I? Who does that?

click



And as for who I'm waiting for?

I'm waiting for the person who's paying me to double-cross my super evil science organization...

You know, the man with all the money. Guy named...

Fantomex.

Okay, so I know I agreed to help, but I feel guilty, and I need to come clean about something.

You feel guilty? Really? **YOU?**

Guilty might not be the right word... It's probably more along the lines of I promised this idiot a bunch of money to get us inside and I can't actually pay.

I mean, most of these guys don't make it through these things anyway, but just in case, could you extend to me some petty cash...a line of credit...something like that?

Wait, what?







The two of
you are *haggling*
while my life lies in
the *balance*.

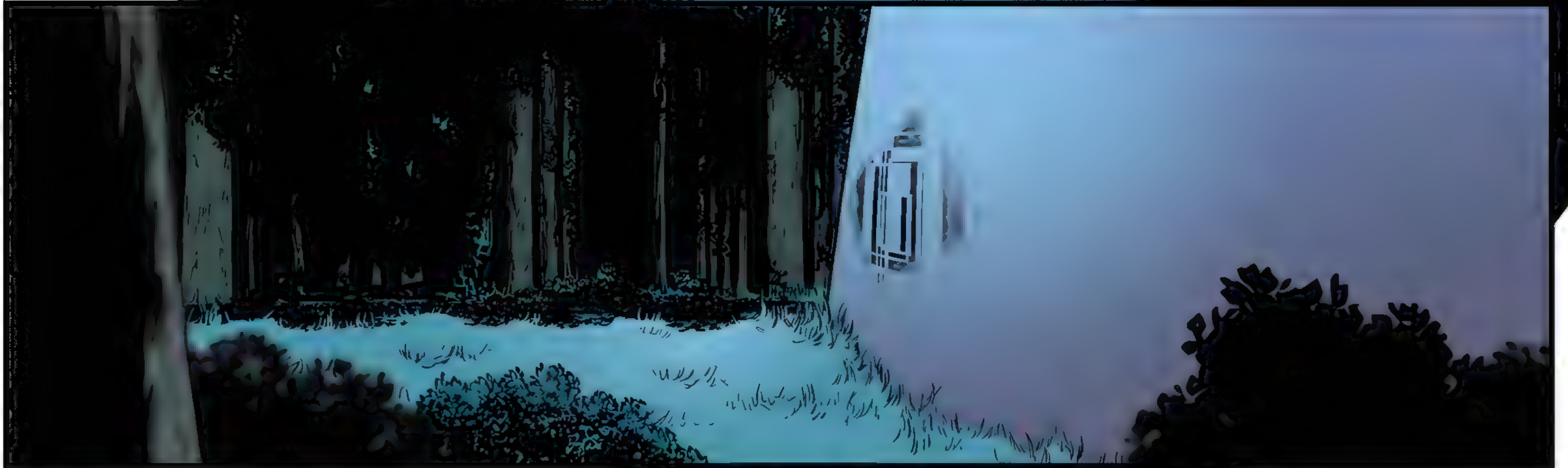
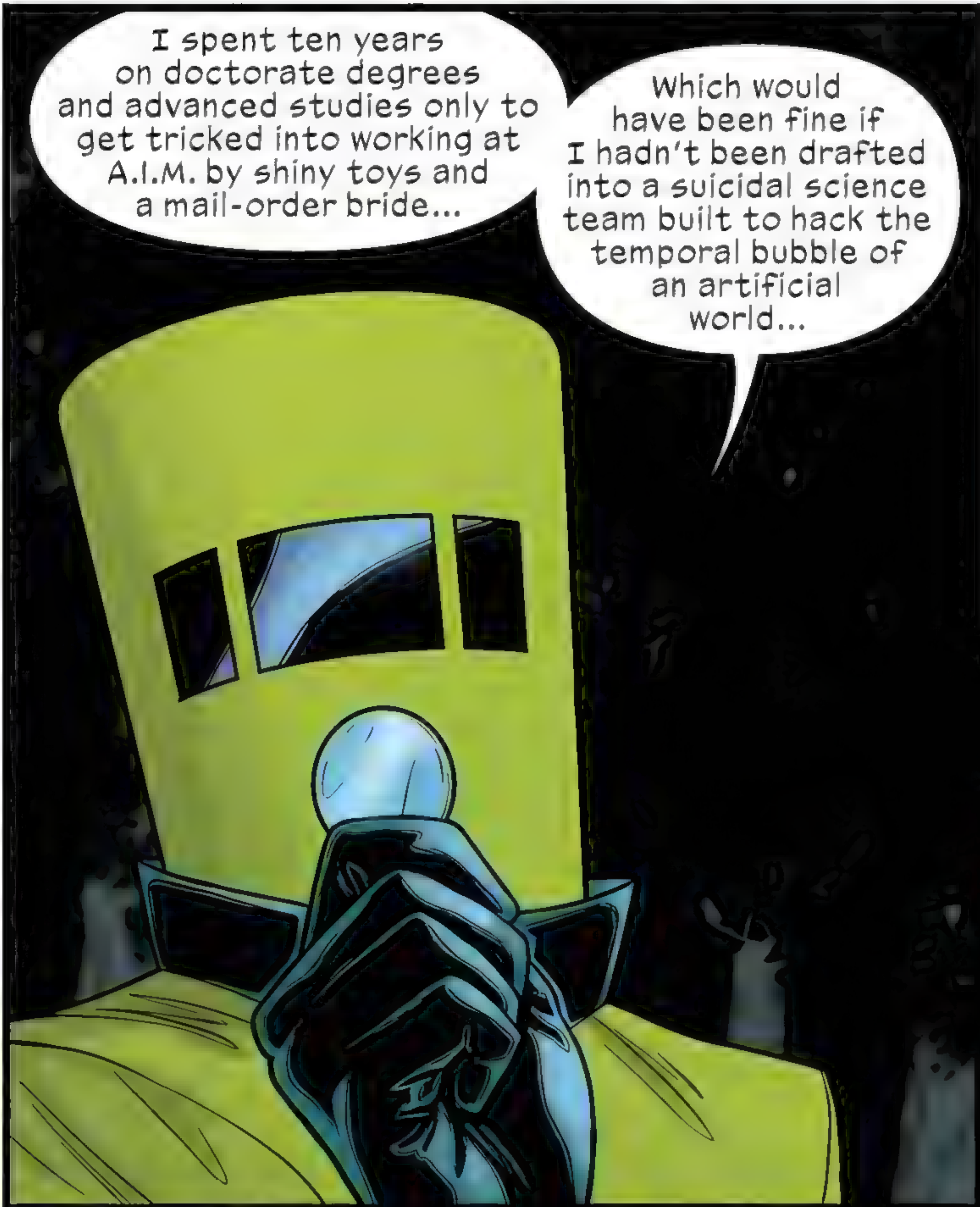
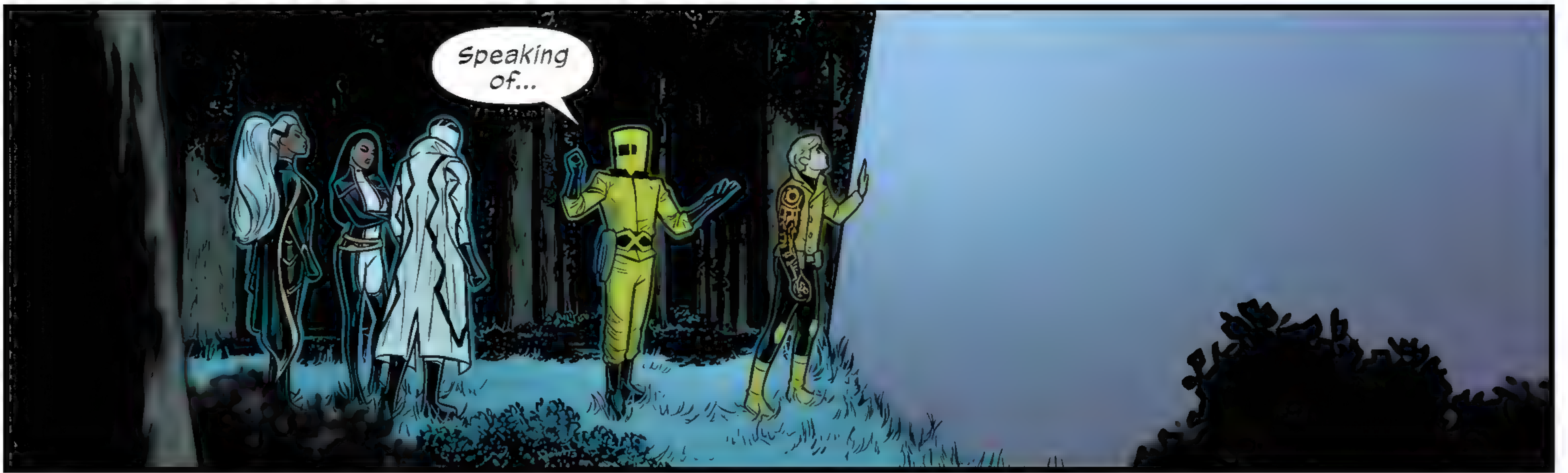
I'm
putting an
end to this
now.



So...
You *are*
paying.



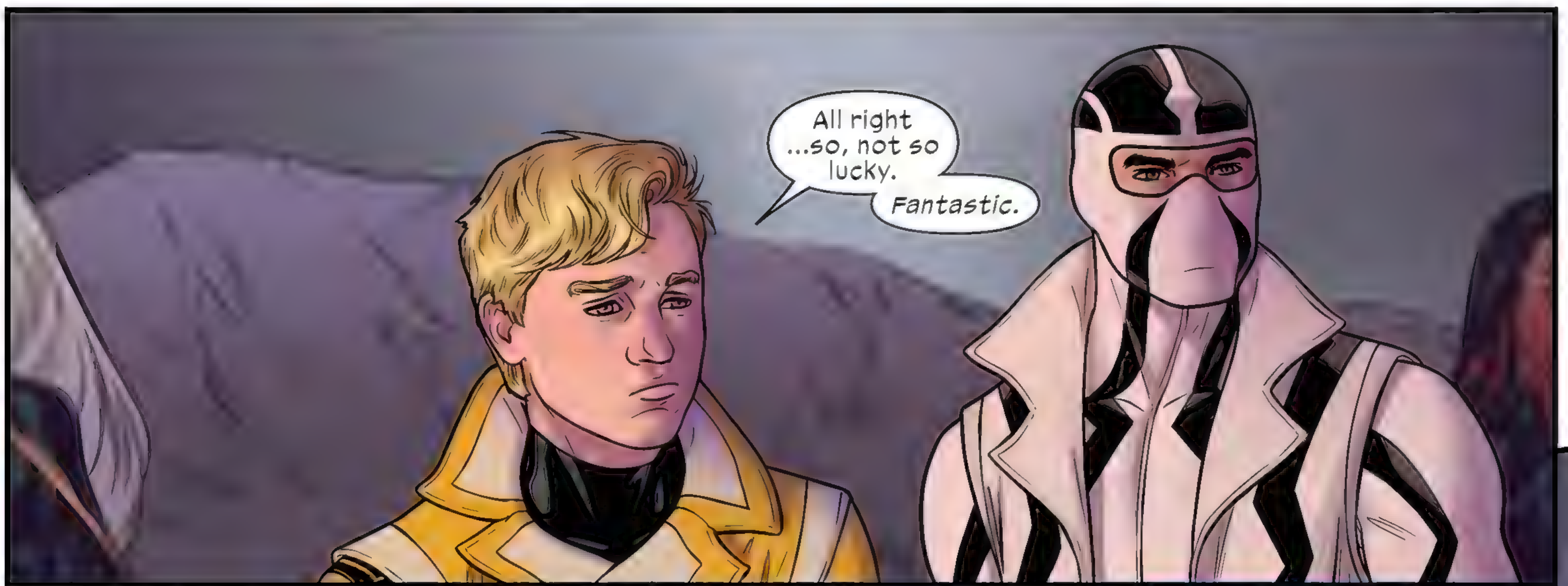
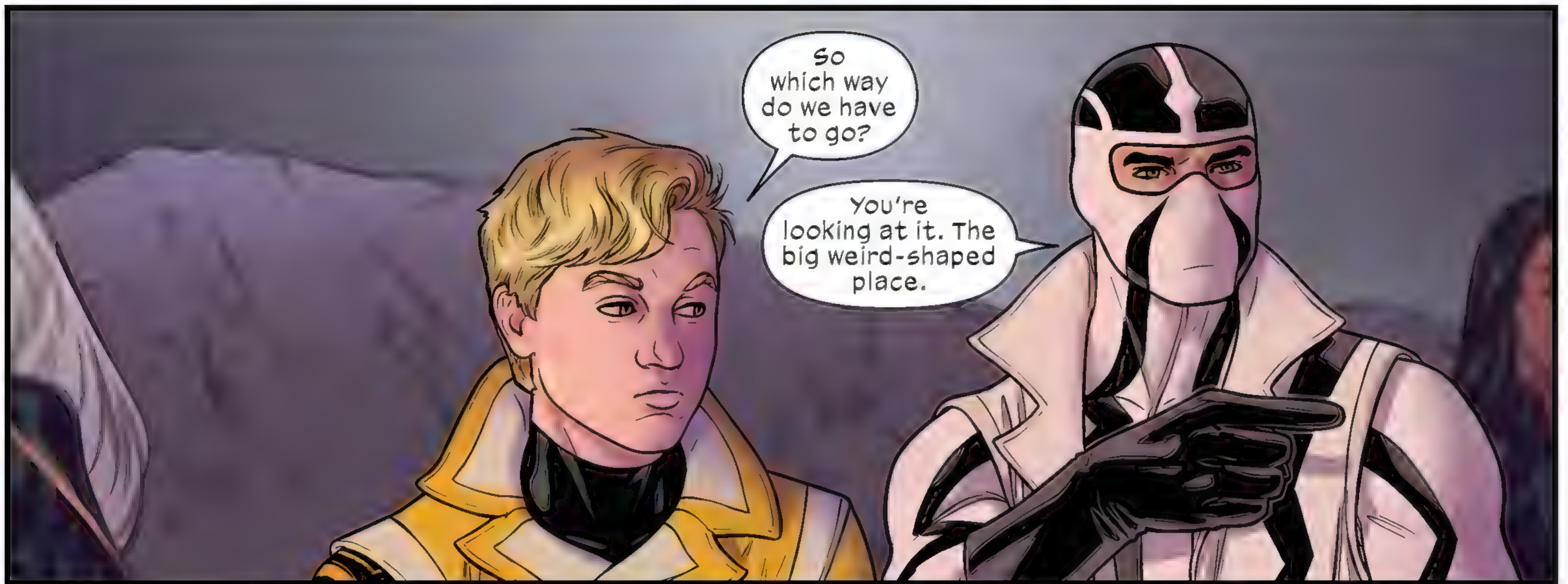
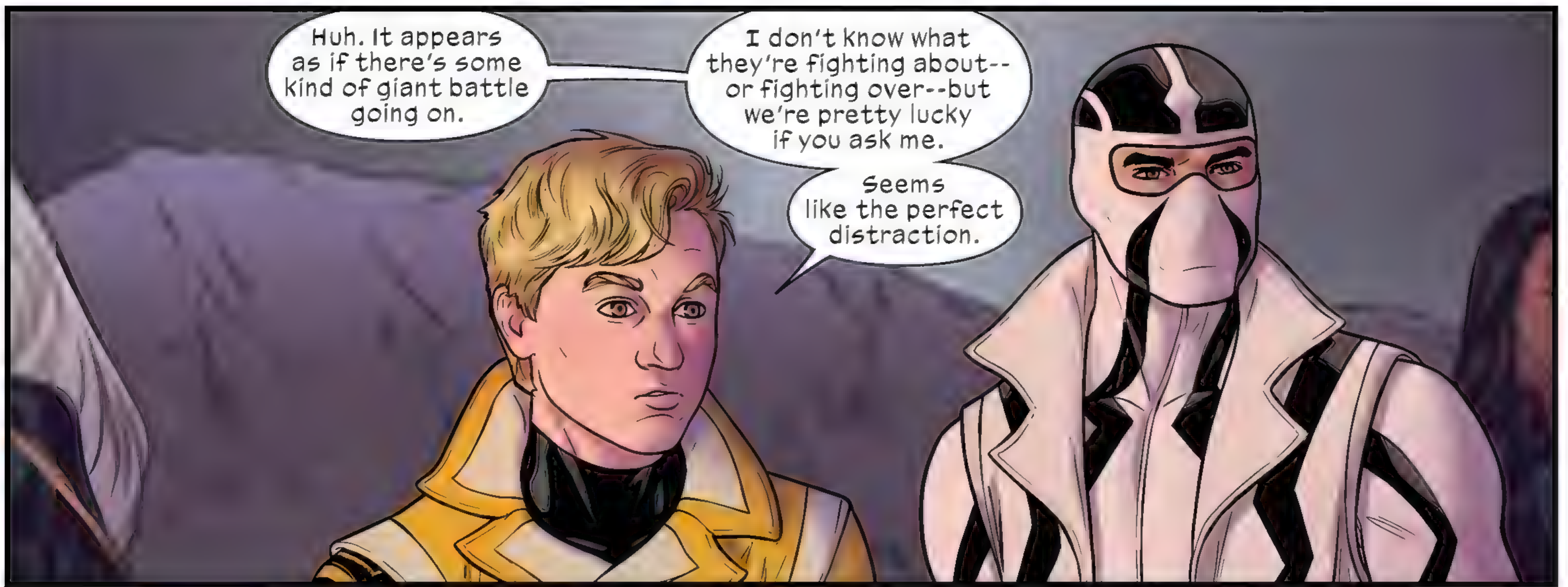
That's all
I was asking
for.





Okay...
everyone
take a good
look.

Welcome to
the World.





Just follow my lead.

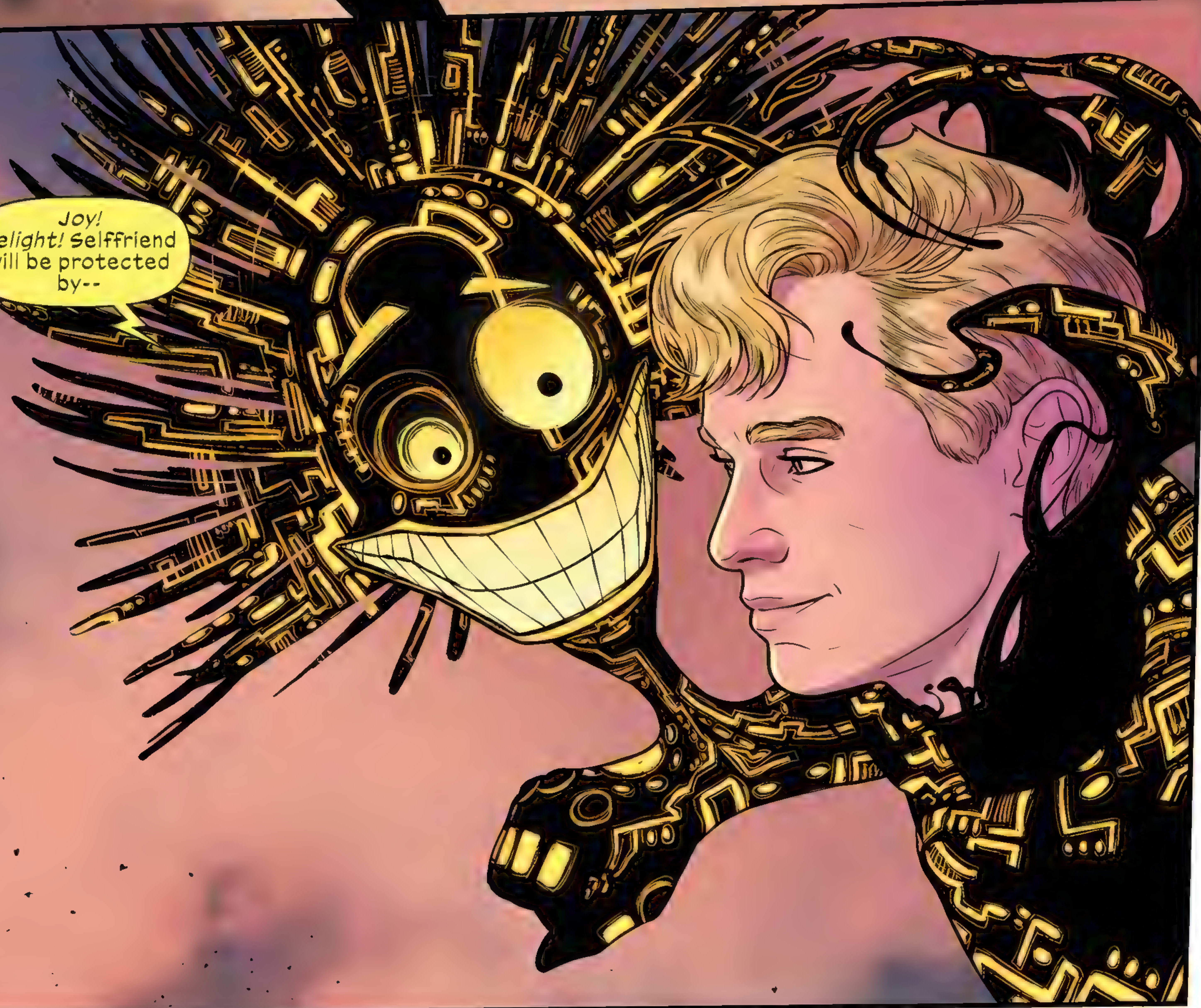


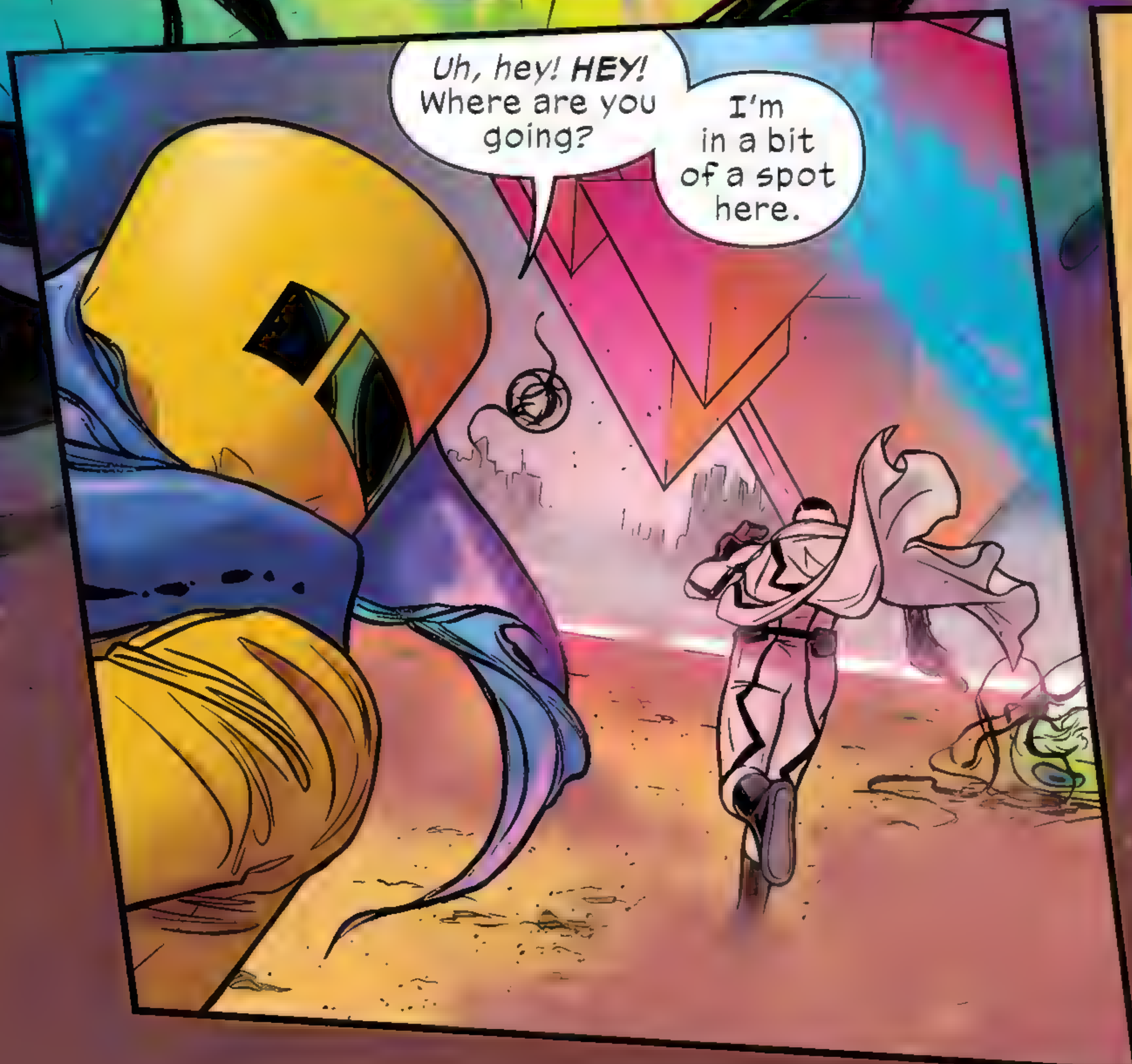
Whoa!

Nice call on
the combat suit,
Warlock! I could
get used to
this!



Joy!
Delight! Selffriend
will be protected
by--







The environment in the World is exceedingly malleable.

Volatile... and subject to change.

All of the micro-components and small swarming machines are especially vulnerable to such manipulation.

Transforming them from building blocks into weapons.

And so, I give the World... *wind.*

Wind to
wreak havoc!
Wind to... ..to...



...to...
uhhhhhhh...

Minutes later.

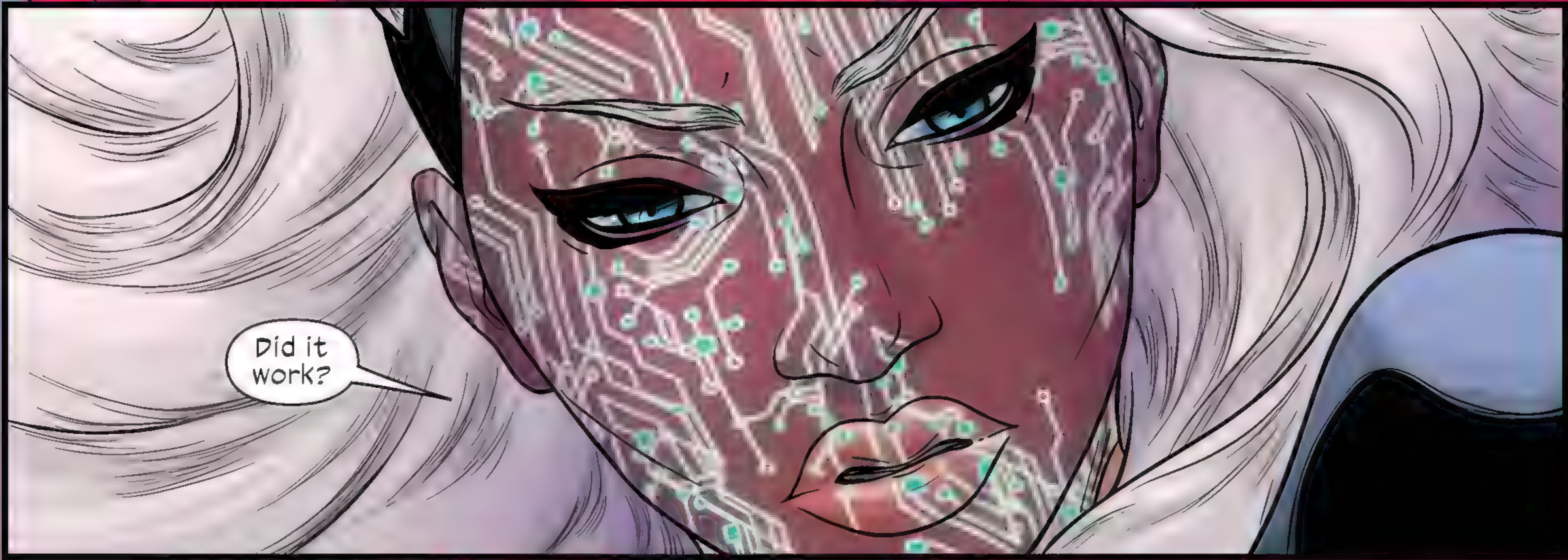


She's coming around.

Storm.



Storm, wake up.



Did it work?

Of course. But now it's time to get you fixed up.

All right, Ned... I picked you not just because you could get us access to the World... but also because of your specific area of expertise.

You figure out what we're looking for yet?



I think so. There's a particular side effect that radical evolutionary experiments in a closed environment have...

Systems that are normally competitive--like organic and technological ones--have a tendency to become accidentally, and terminally, intertwined...

"So we built a machine to pull them apart."

"It's in there.
In the same direction
Fantomex ran off to."

"Who
knows..."

...we
might even run
into...

Him.

Uh, this
isn't as
bad as it
looks.



I promise.



That's the machine we need. You need to climb inside the unity field, while I man the controls.



When I activate the machine...it will begin to decouple you from the virus.



Hopefully you're not past its ability to *separate* them.



Powering
on.



The lingering
question is...



Why do what I'm
doing--why go through
all this--if I can let go...
and be resurrected?

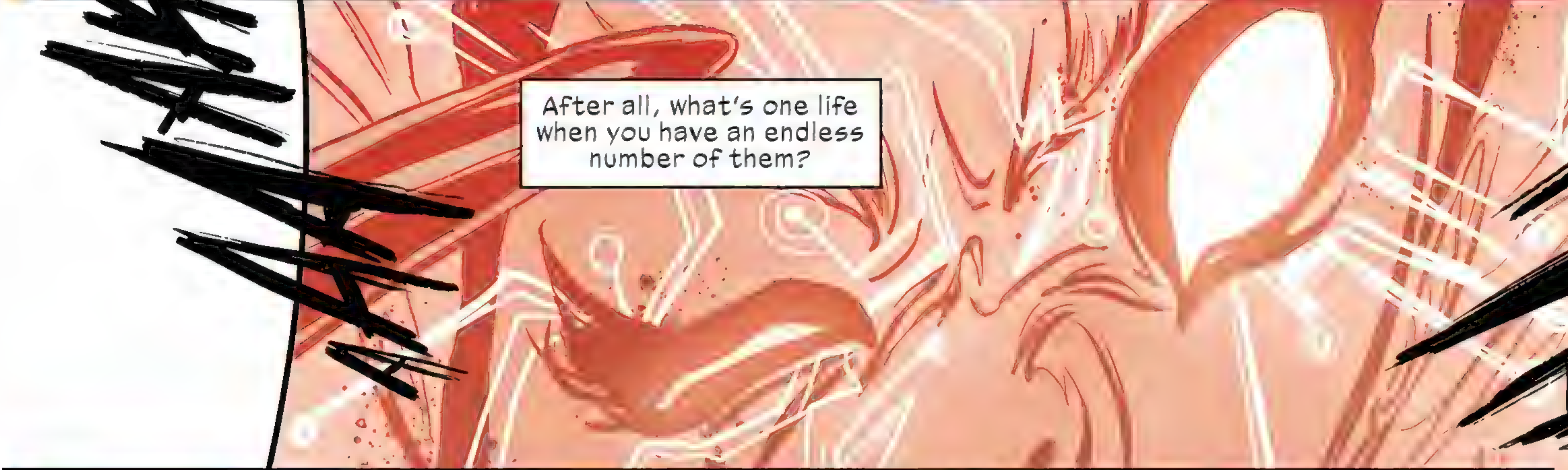


Hey! Looks
like backup has
arrived!

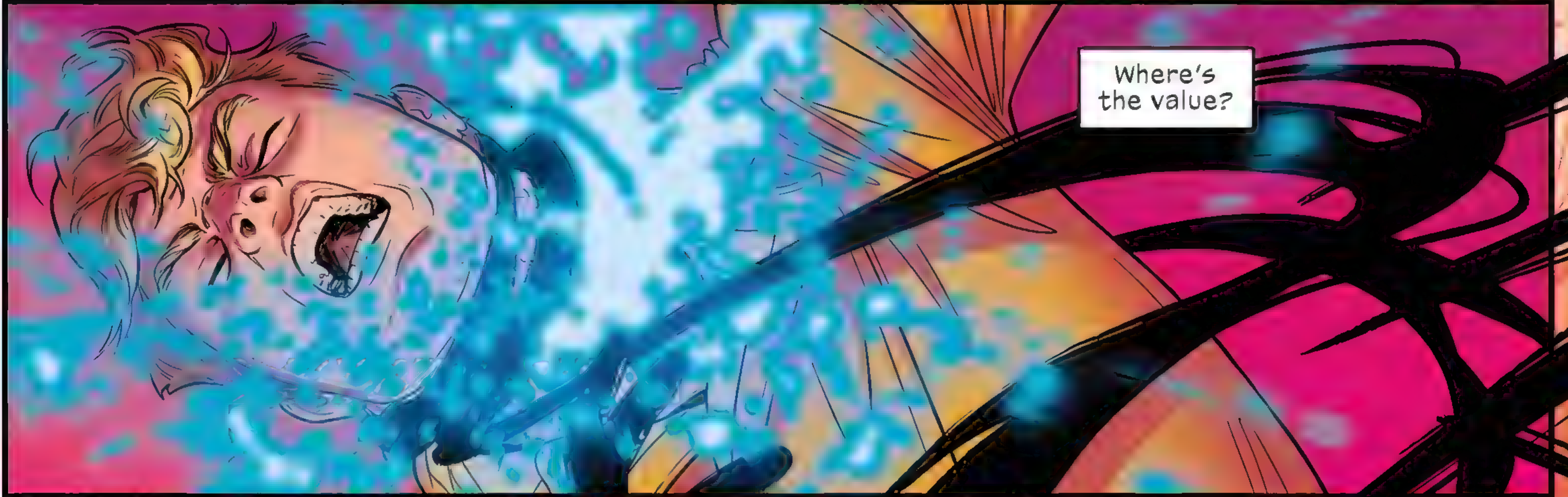
Why struggle?
Why fight?



Why not just
surrender to the
inevitable--wash
my hands of it--
and start anew?



After all, what's one life
when you have an endless
number of them?



Where's
the value?



How can you
even define what
a "good life" is?



Arggggh!

And...
And...

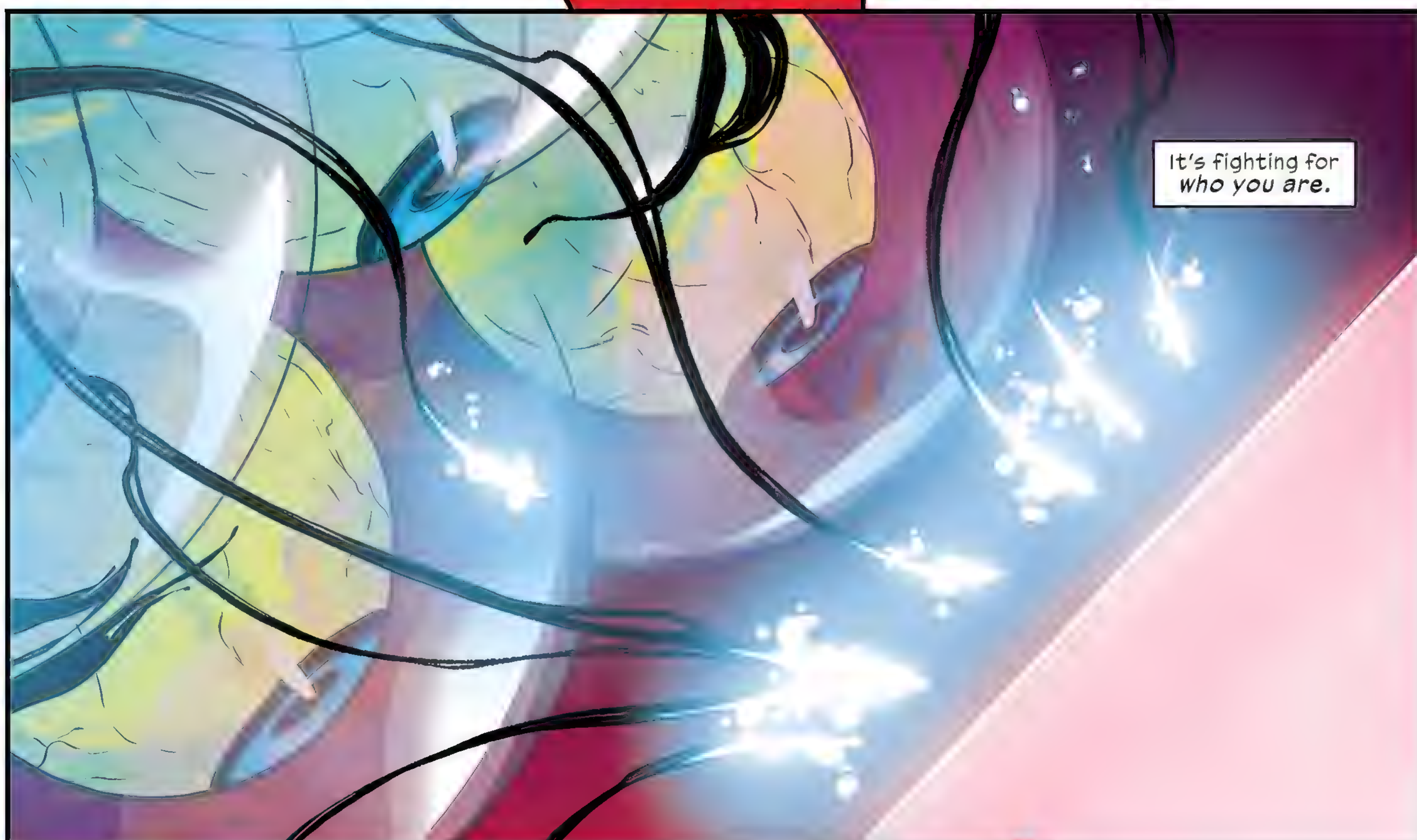
I'll tell
you...



The true measure of
life is in the *living*.



It isn't a series of *do-overs* and
restarts... It's fighting for what
you have, what you believe in...



It's fighting for
who you are.



I am a
mutant.

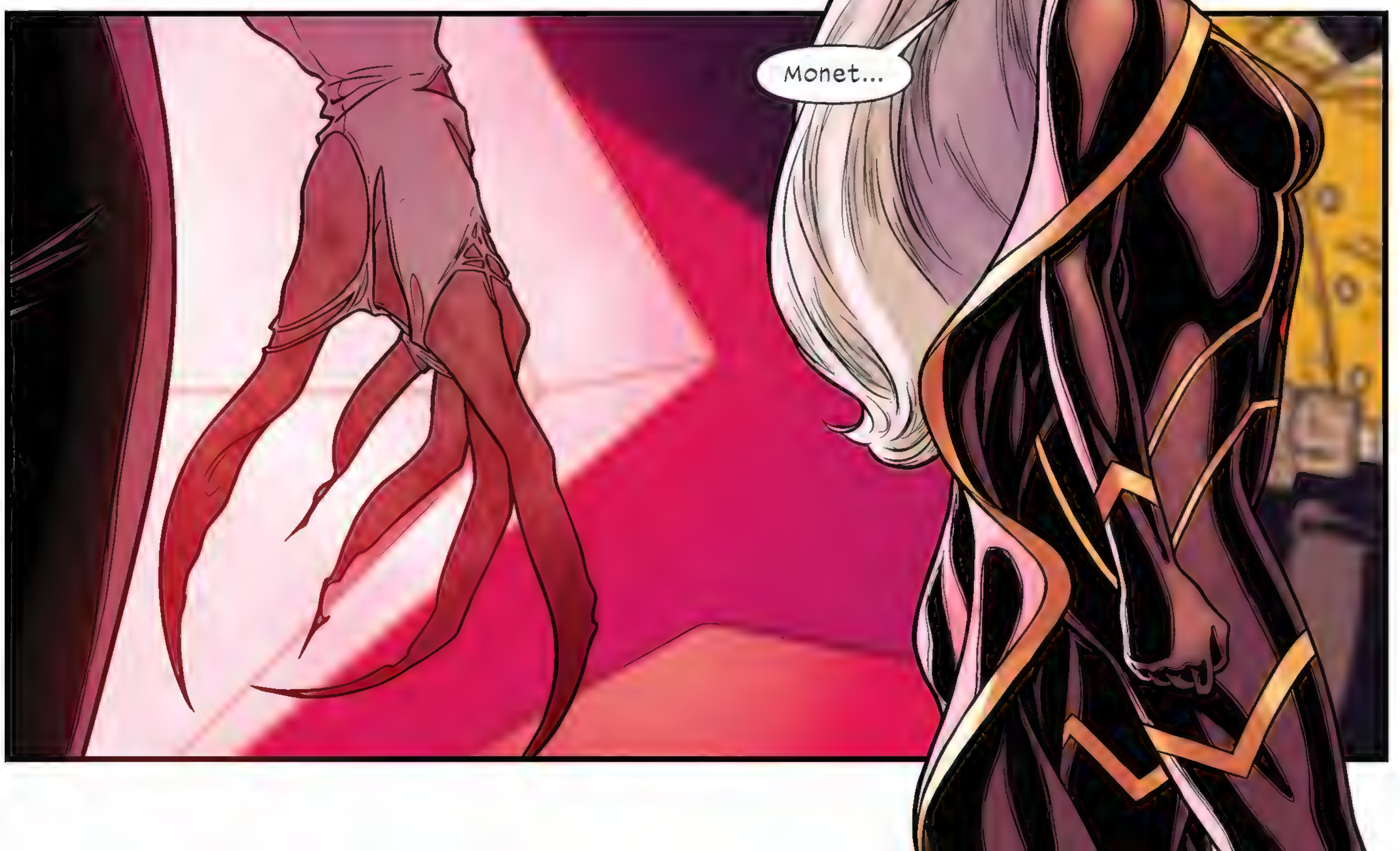
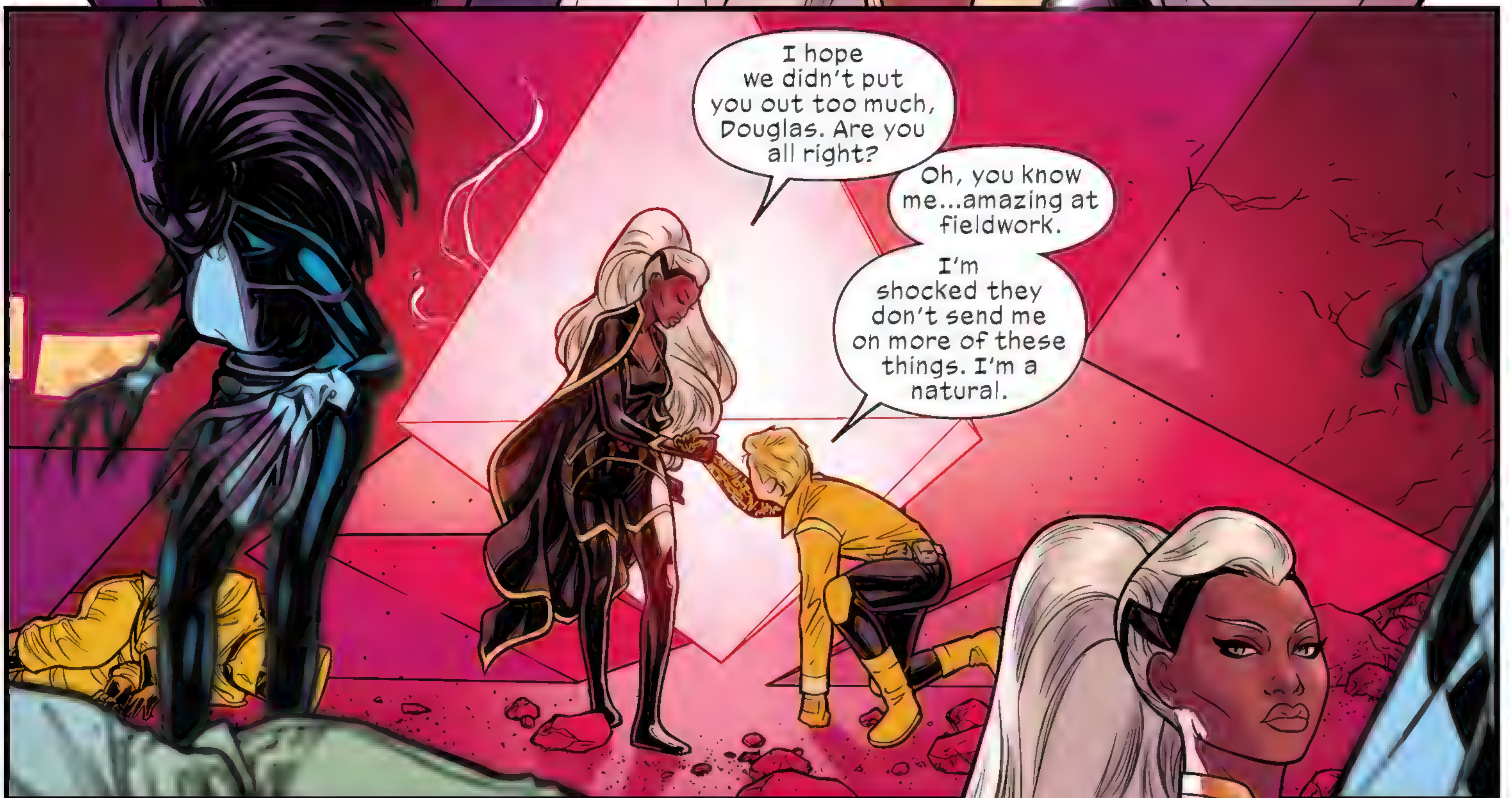
NO!

I am a
goddess.

And I want
to live.

I'm
better,
see?

Today
I've had my
fill of machines.
I'm done
now...





Thank you
for figuring all
this out.

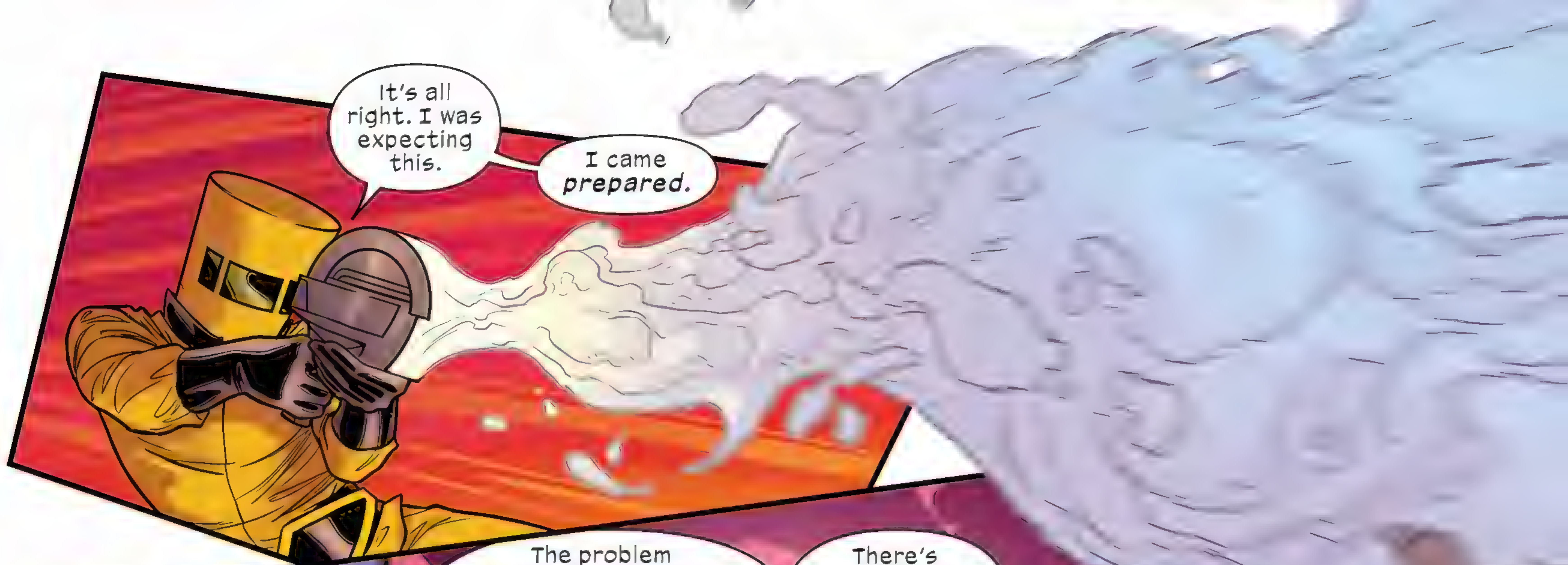
I am
in your
debt.

Don't be
ridiculous...
it was--
Huh?



That
doesn't look
right...

What's
happening with
the containment
field?



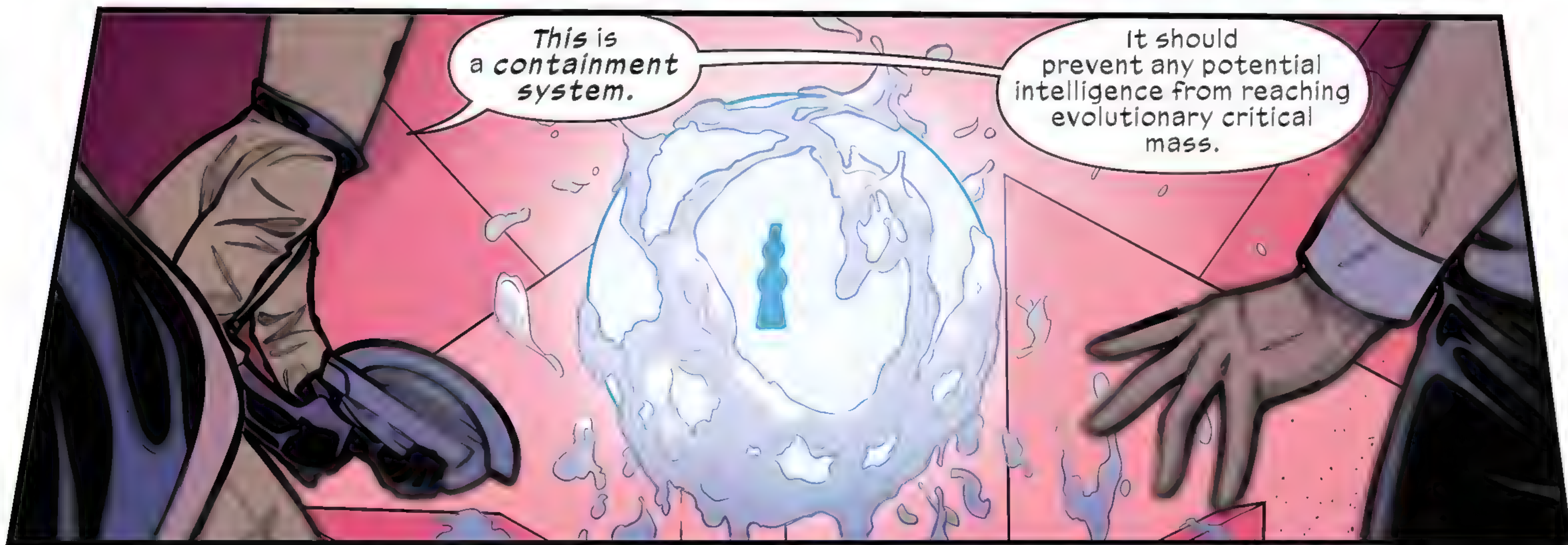
It's all right. I was expecting this.

I came prepared.



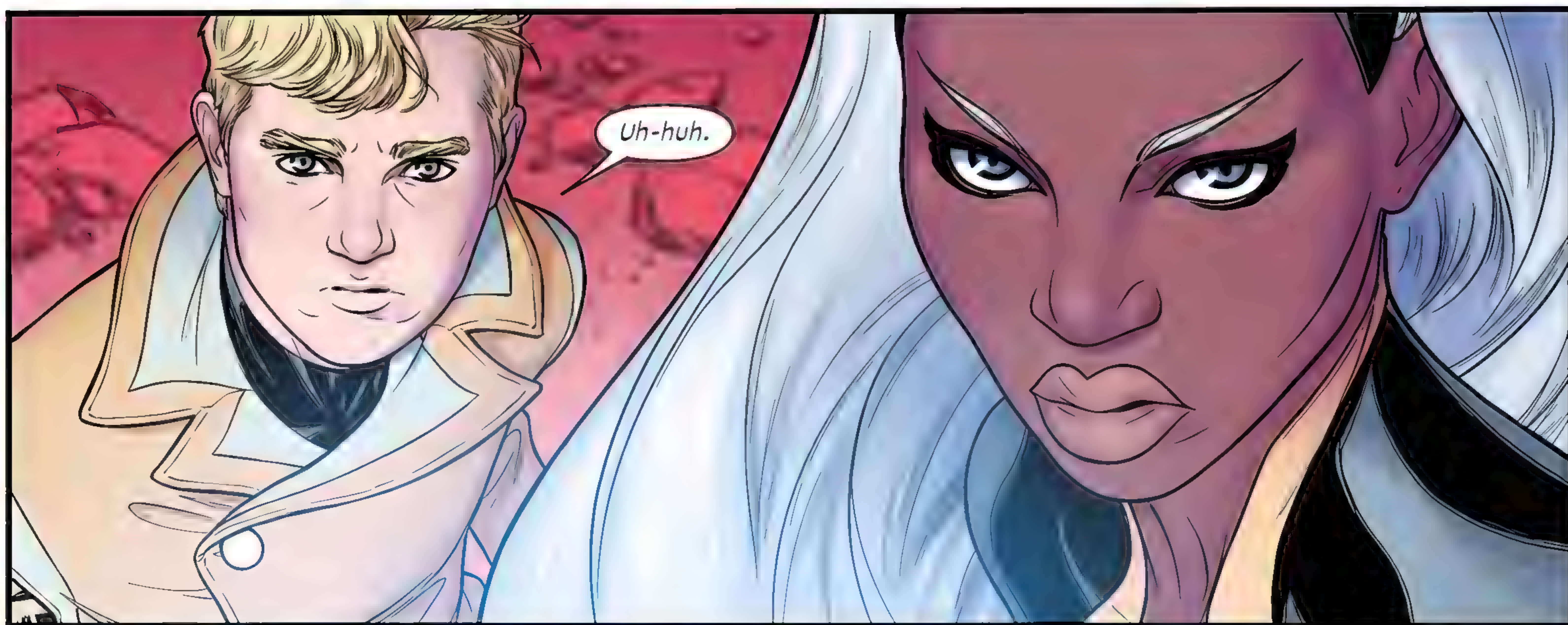
The problem with how this machine works is, in this case, you're leaving behind a pure technological construct that's been exposed to the same temporal forces that Storm was...

There's no telling what it could become if it expanded at will.



This is a containment system.

It should prevent any potential intelligence from reaching evolutionary critical mass.



Uh-huh.





I don't need it. You keep it. Spend it, whatever...just don't give it to charity.

So you're staying too?

Are you kidding?

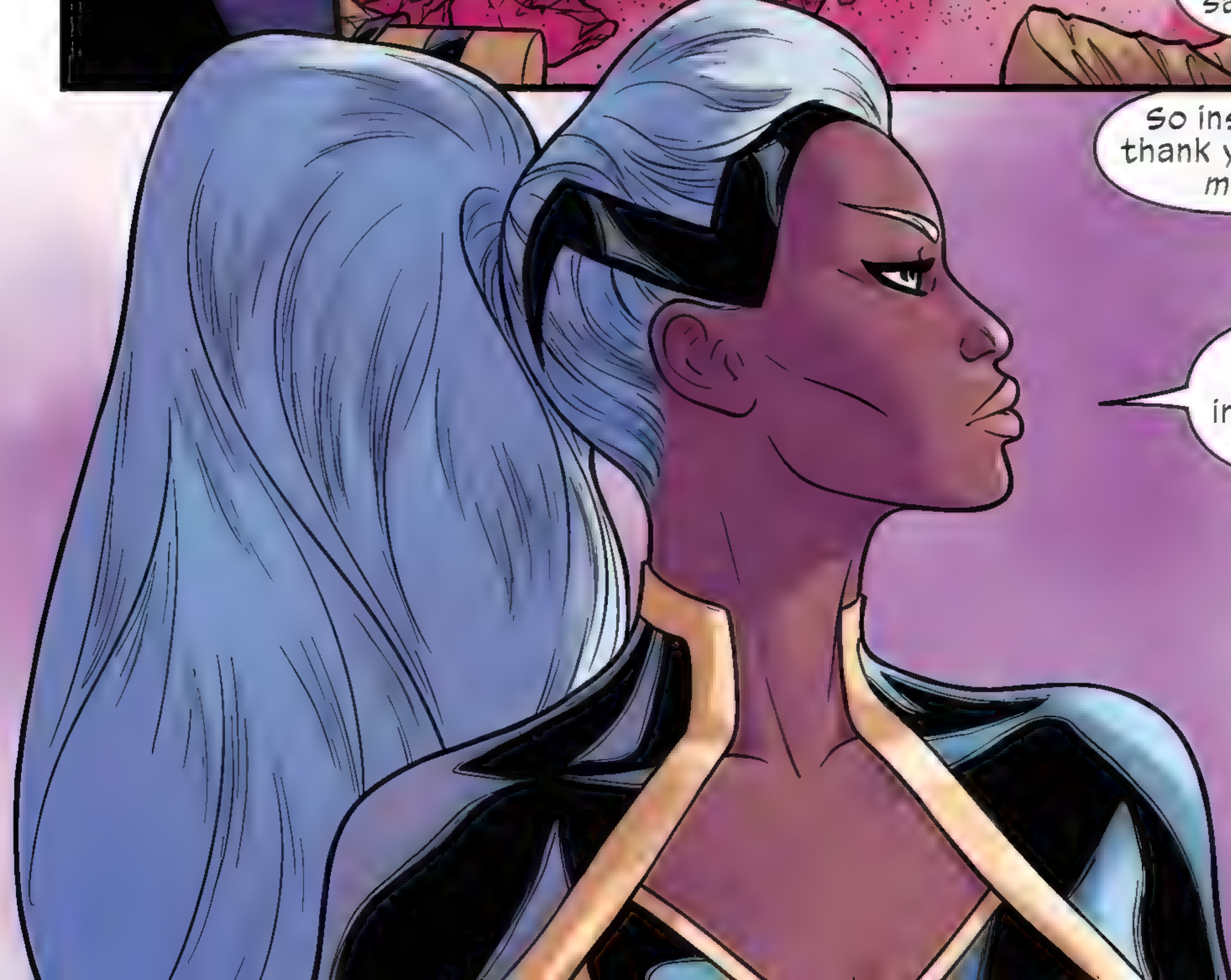


Look at this place. It's amazing...

It's like an evil scientist's dream lab...except it's not a lab, it's an entire world. What's not to love?

With talk like that, I should take you with us-- whether you like it or not.

But you helped save me...



So instead-- thank you...very much.

Do not try to get into too much trouble.

Epilogue.



I'm leaving now, but so you know...you're not fooling anyone.

That energy pattern you're throwing off really gives the game away to someone like me.

I can make it out, clearly--it's *language*--which means you're conscious. Sentient.

You got something you want to say about that?

A close-up, comic-style illustration of a young man with short, wavy blonde hair and light green eyes. He is looking off to the side with a serious, intense expression. The background is a solid dark purple. The character is wearing a white shirt with a visible collar.

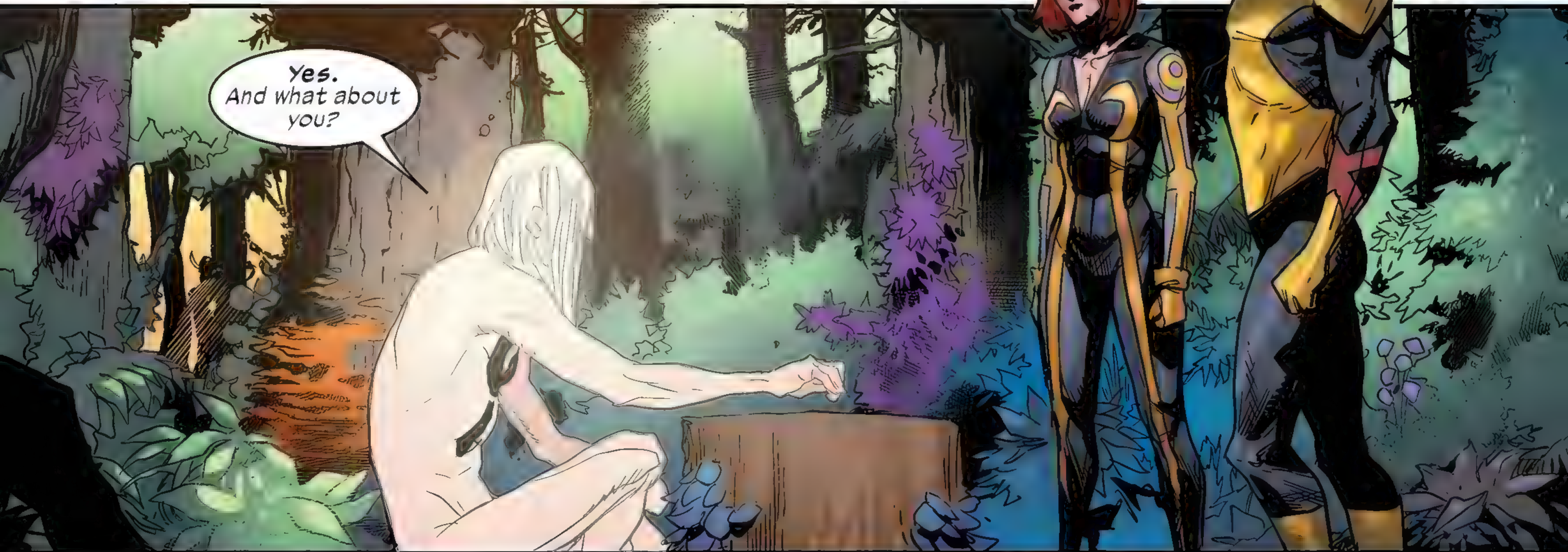
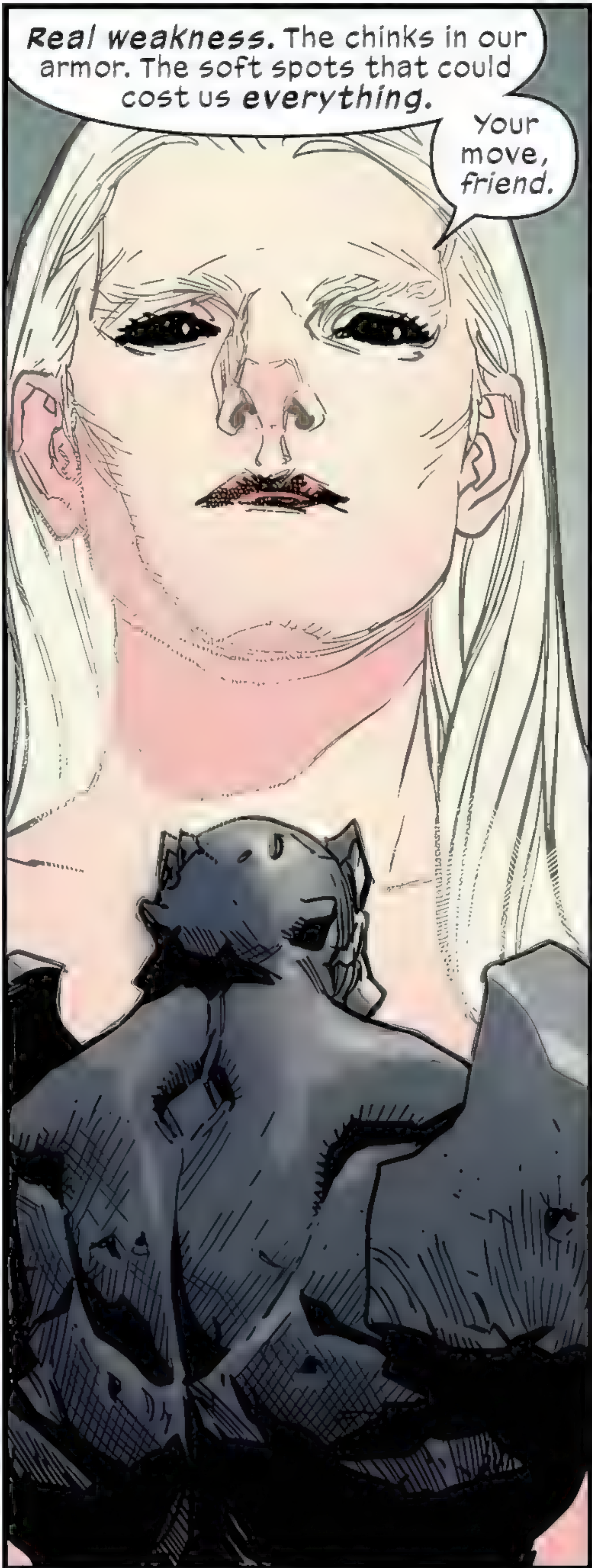
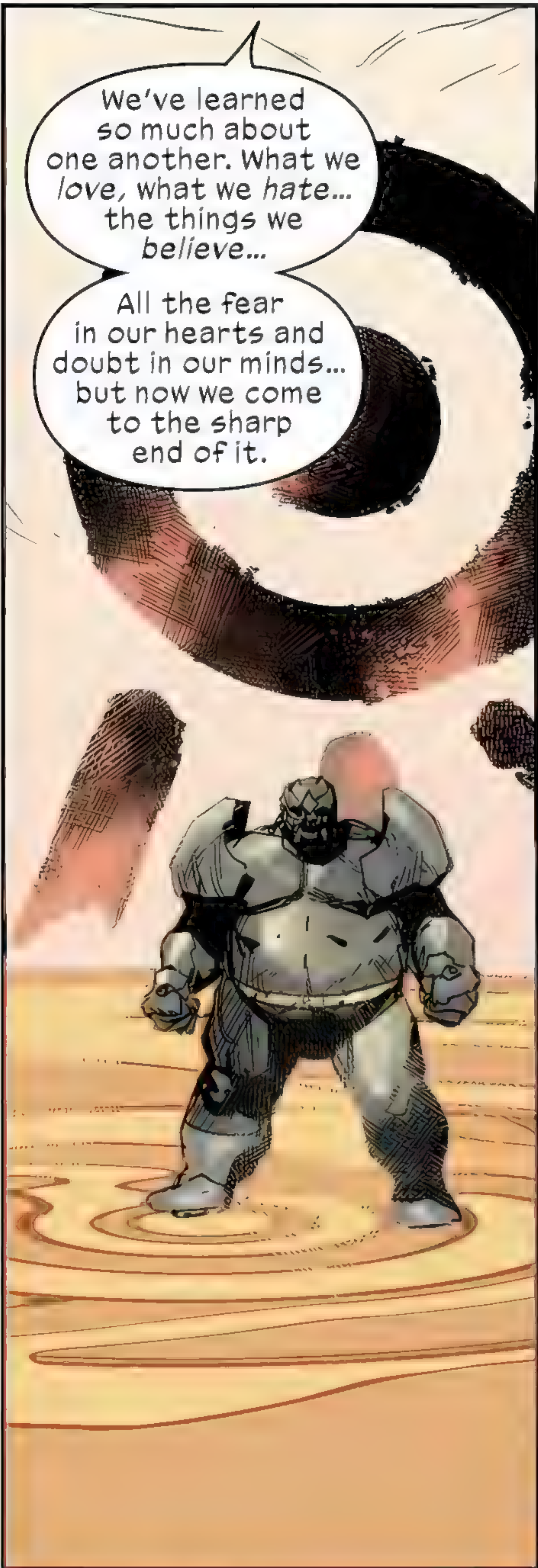
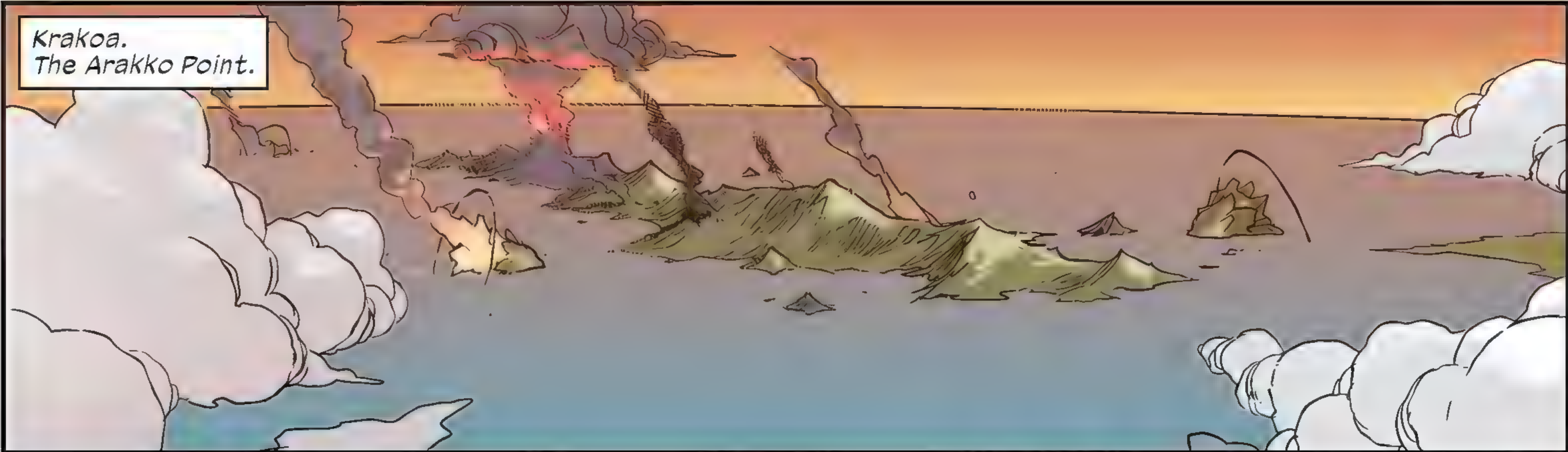
A man with short brown hair, wearing a grey jacket, stands in profile, looking towards a large, glowing white sphere. Inside the sphere is a blue circular emblem with a stylized cross-like design. A speech bubble above the sphere contains the text "NISOSES NISOSES NISOSES". The background is a soft pinkish-red gradient.

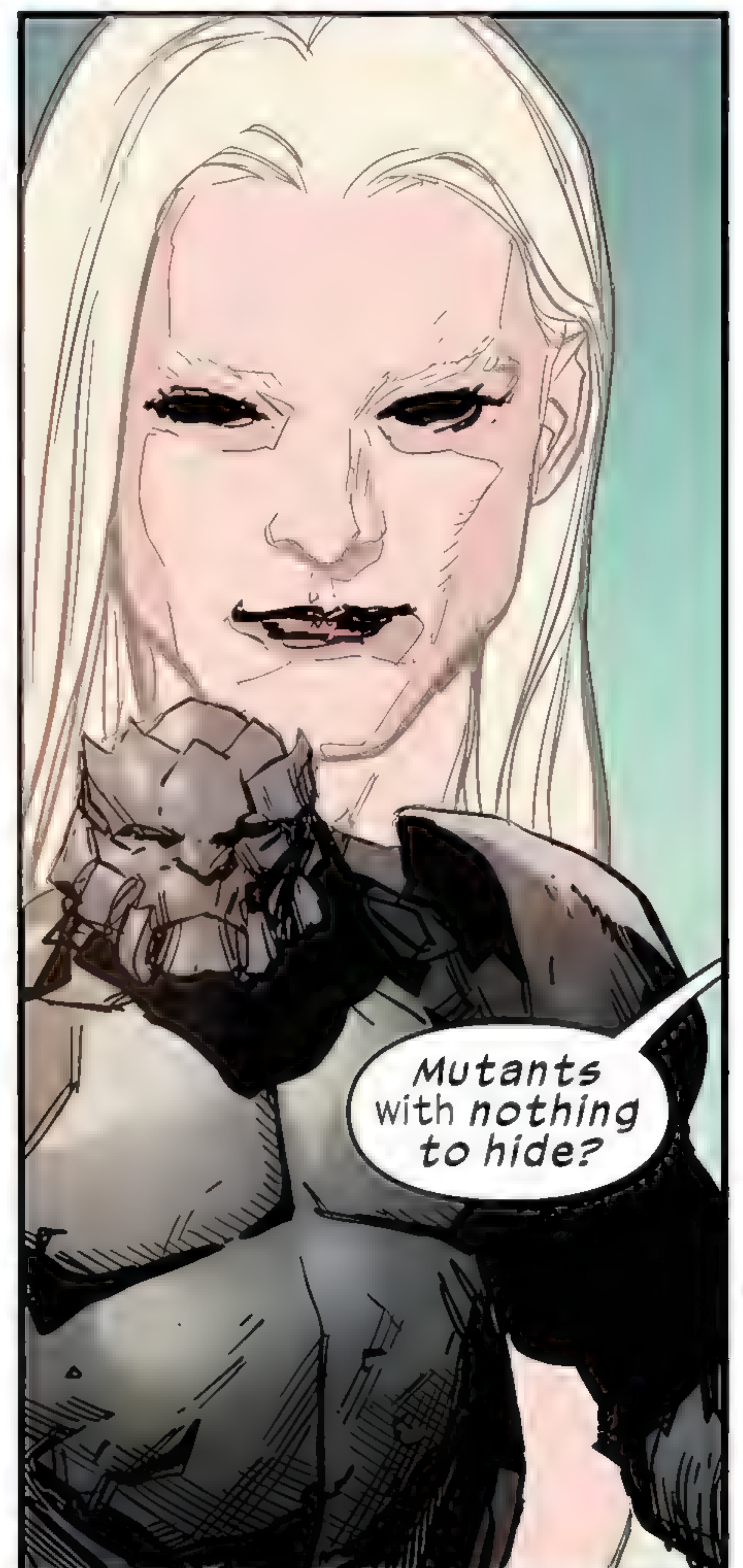
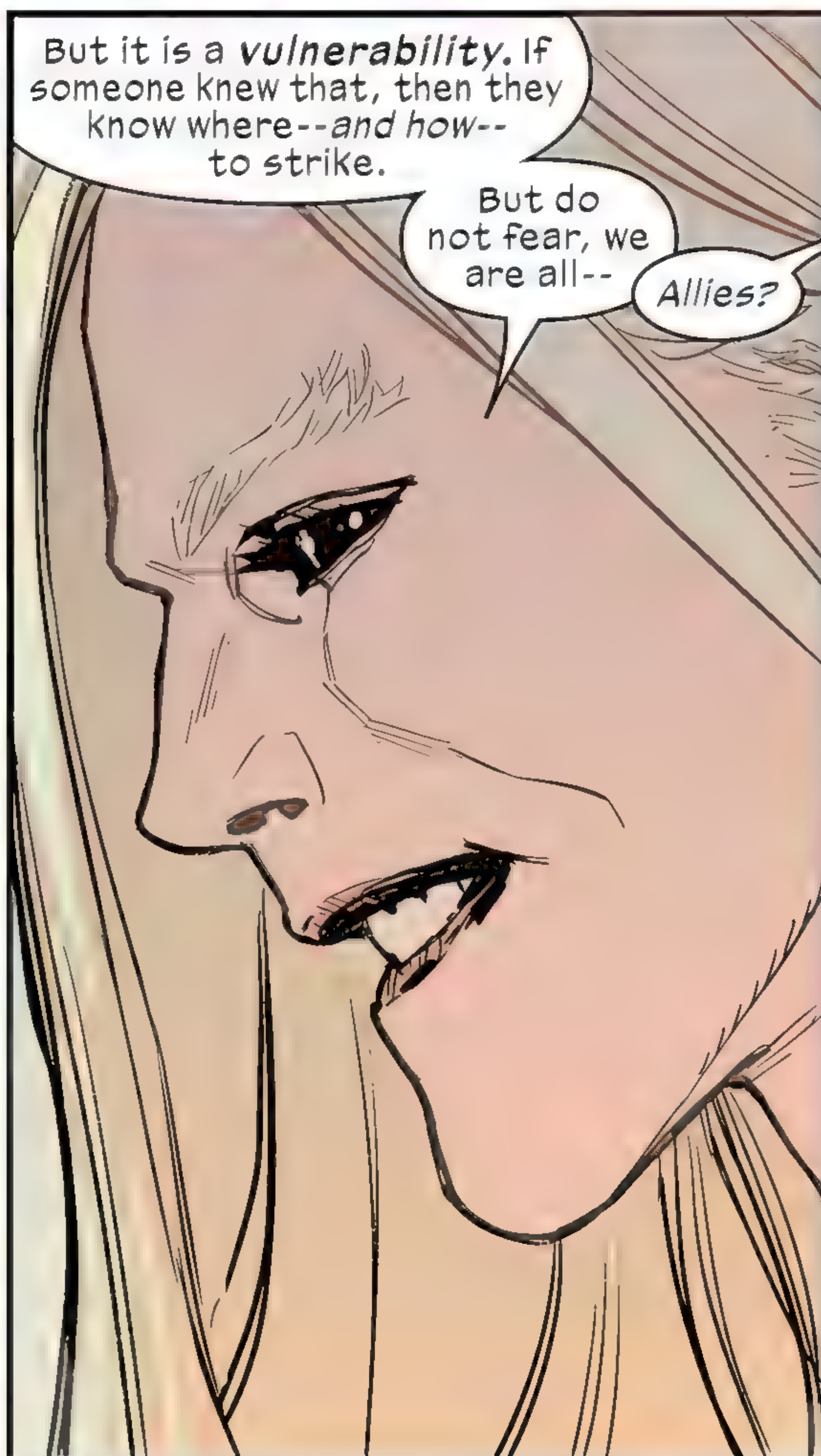
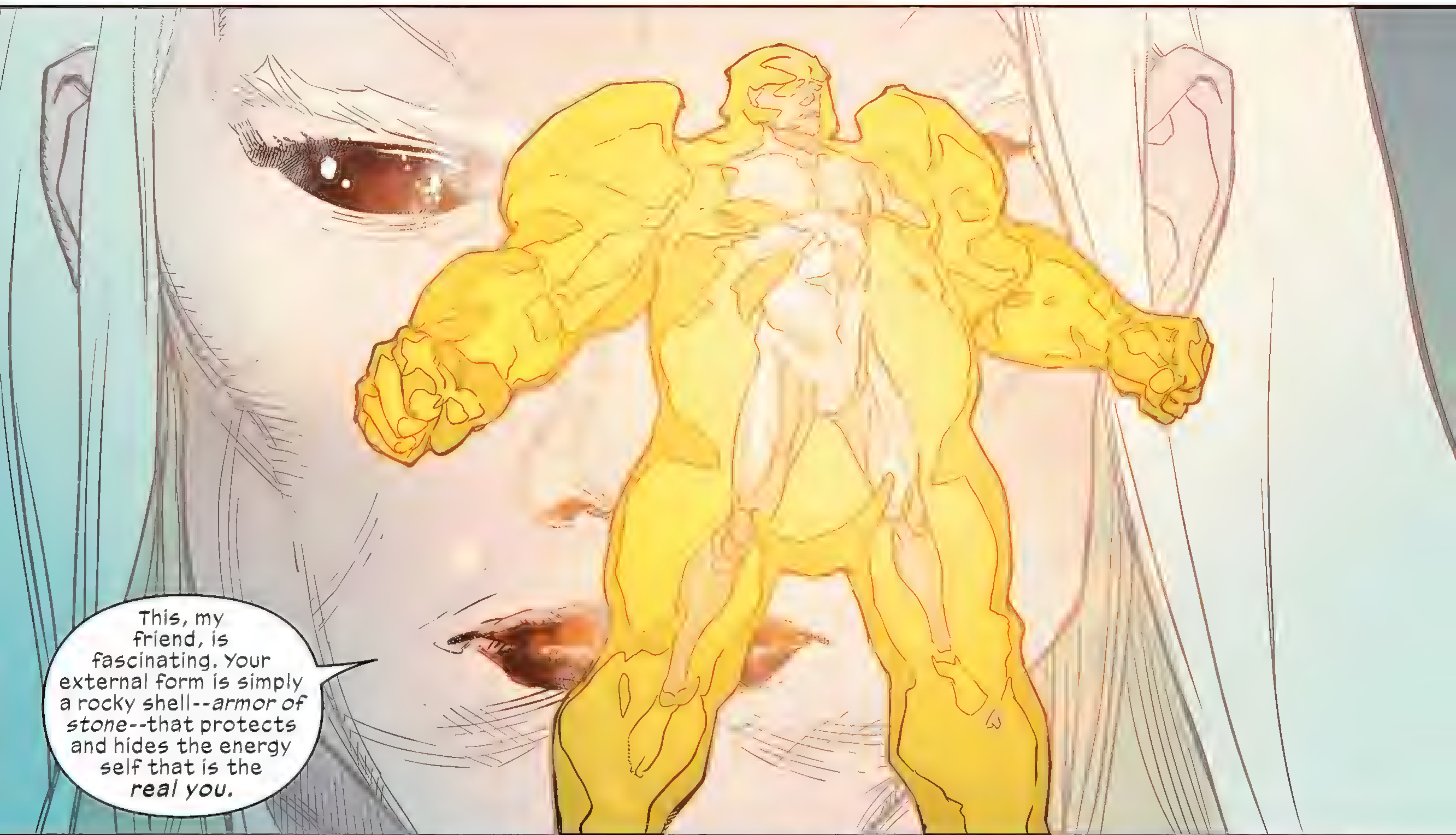
I'll be seeing you too.

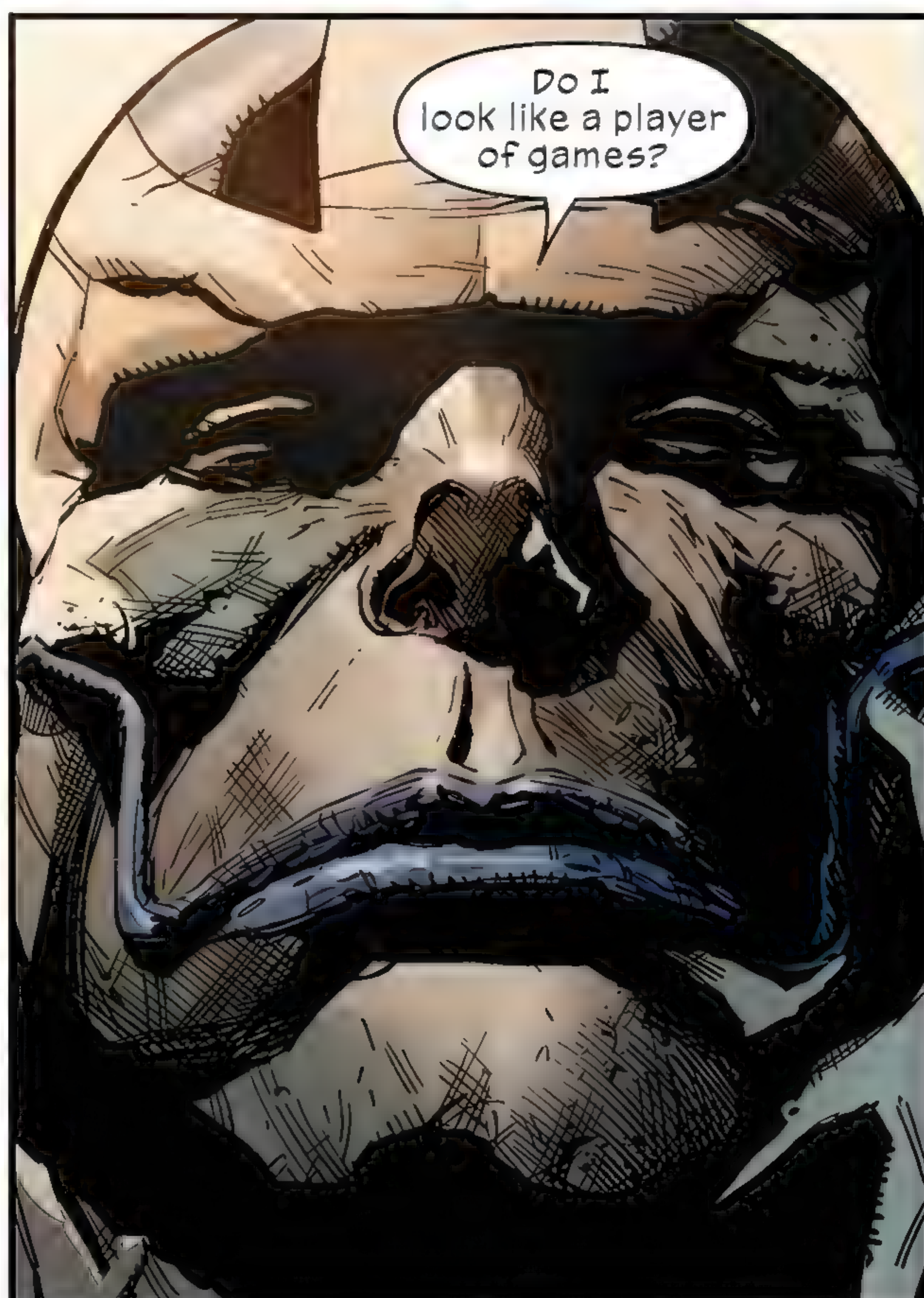
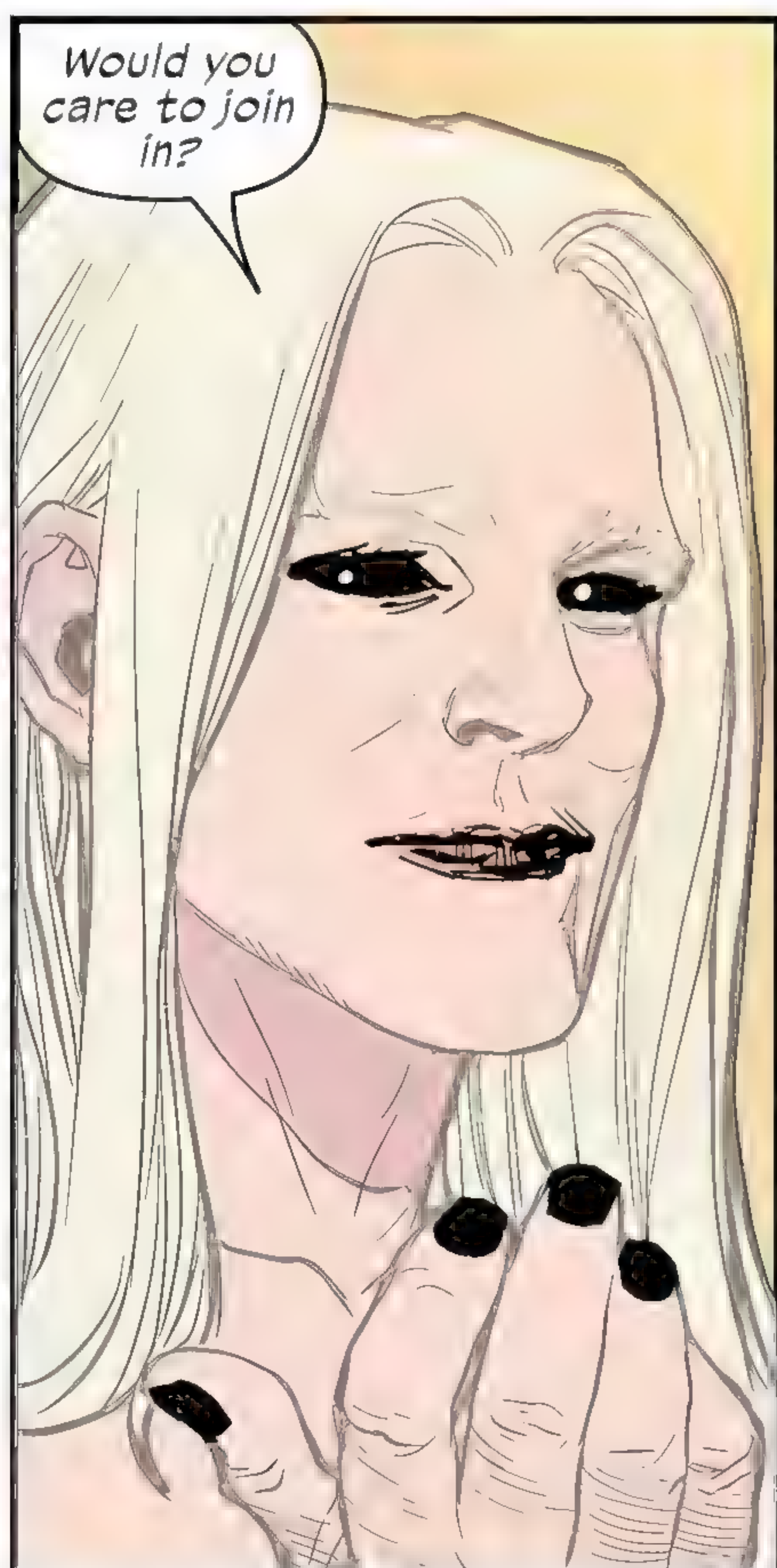


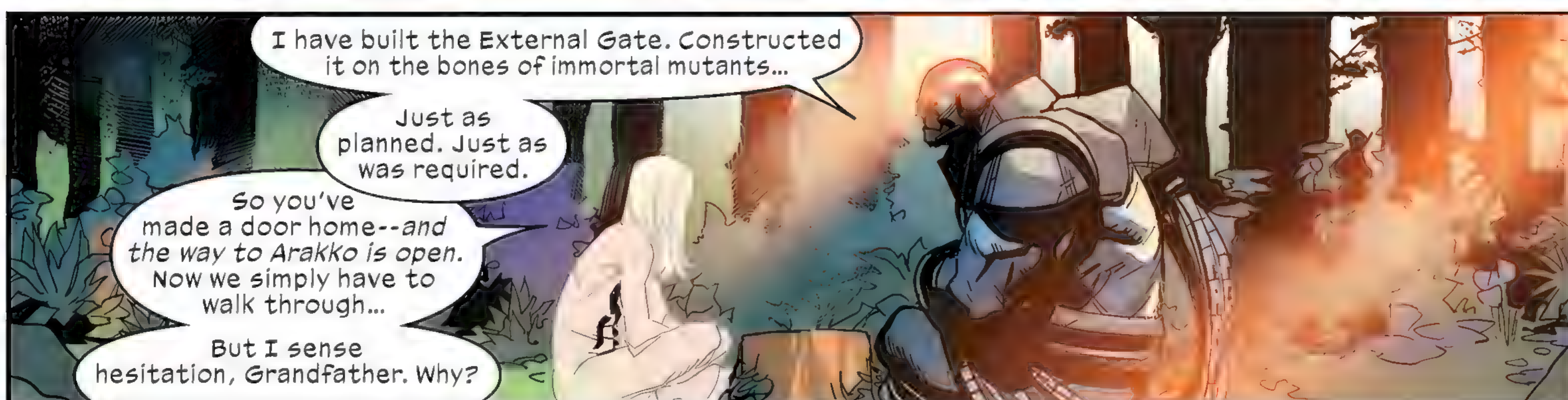
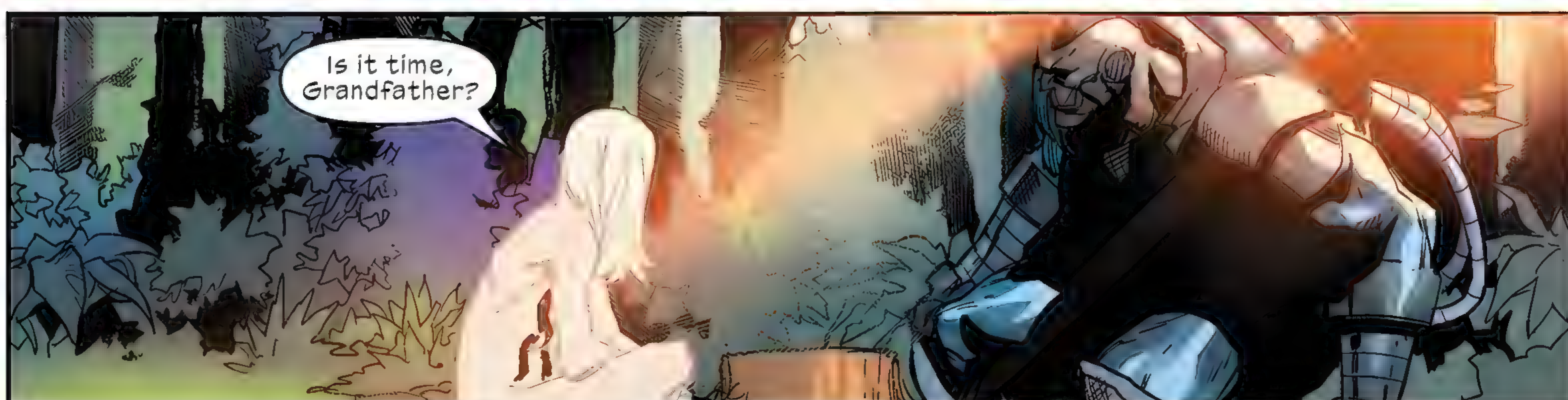
Amenth

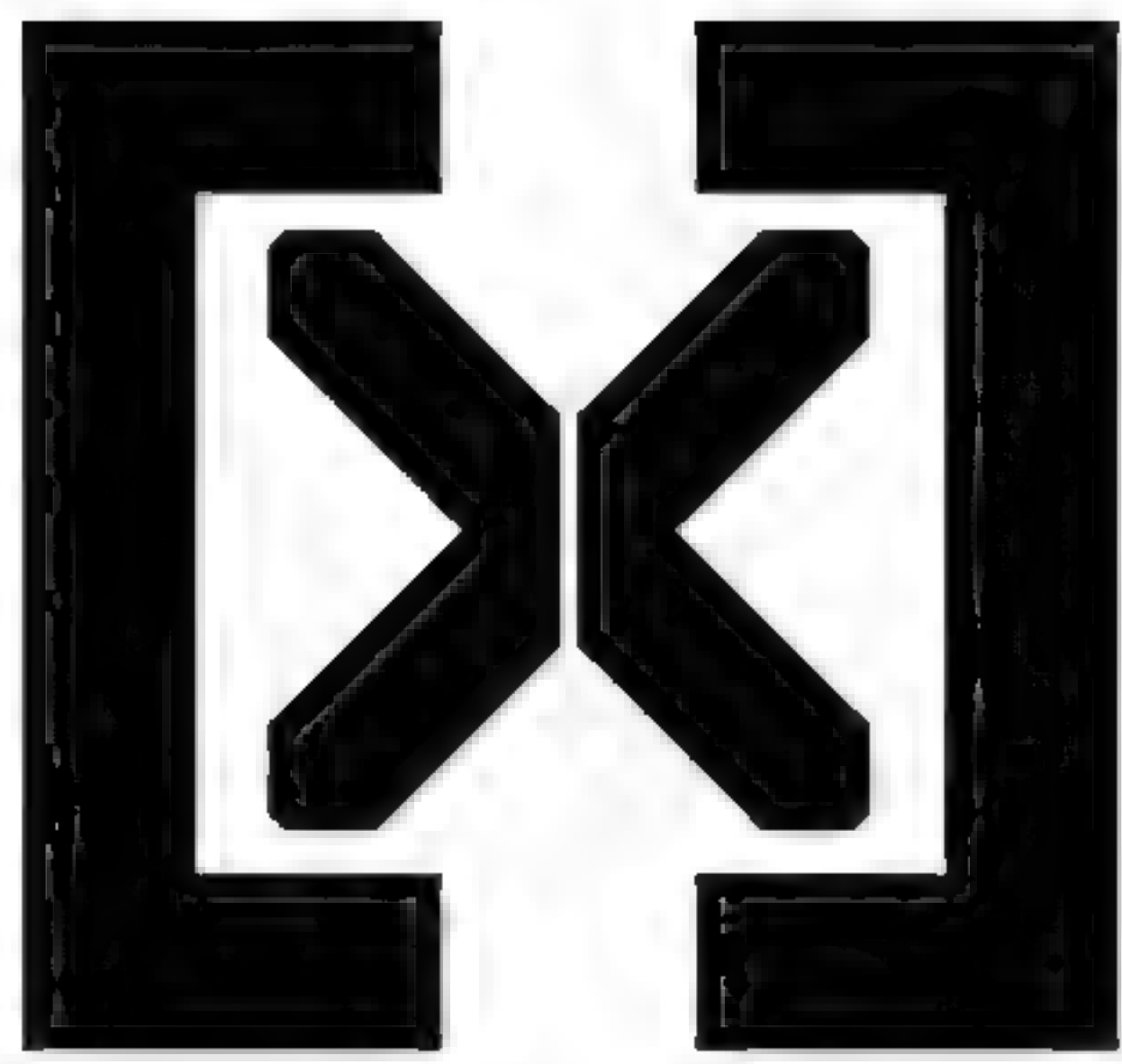
17











[the one]
[the land]

A MUTANT'S HISTORY OF

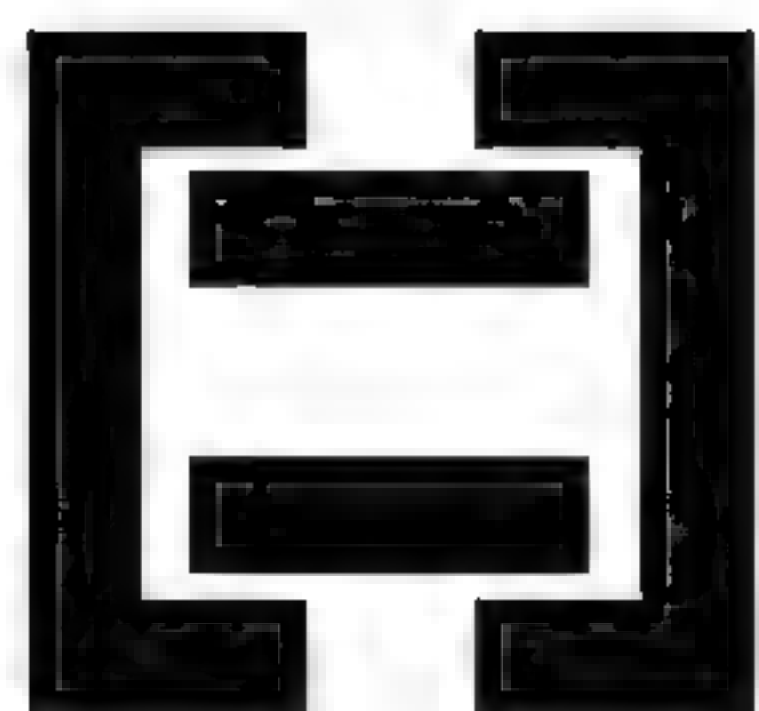
ARAKKO



AND THE FALLEN WORLD OF AMENTH



[x_Okkara_
[x_Arakko_



[.X]
[.....X]

[Krakoa]
[We_eps]

"I'll start with what *I know you know*. The story as was told to me: *Okkara*, the one land of mutants.

"It was ancient before that word existed, but not yet old in the way they were old.

"The Twilight sword of the enemy tore the world asunder, and what was one became two.

"And from the chasm between them--from *that dark world*--the enemy poured into this world.



"Until, at great cost, the army of the enemy--along with Arakko itself--were pushed back through, and the chasm was sealed shut.



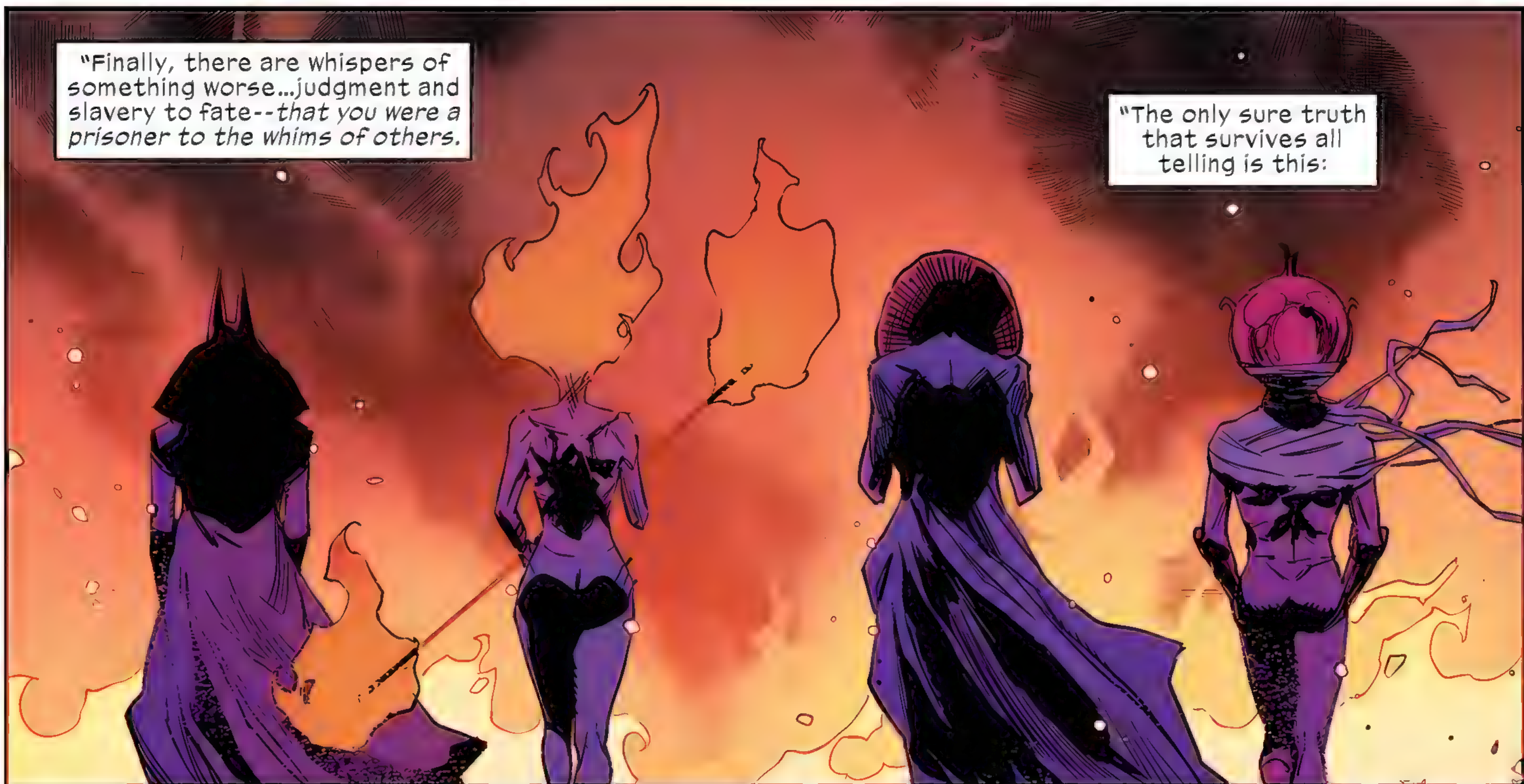
"But like all stories old enough to grow in the telling, it sometimes becomes difficult to separate *fact* from *fiction*...or truth from lies.

"Some say that you stayed behind to prevent that world from falling. To seal the breach and save what could be saved.



"After all, you were Apocalypse, the warrior-god in blue--the great reseed--the first mutant of the second generation of mutantdom on Earth.

"But there are others who tell stories of betrayal--of sacrificing your family to preserve yourself and what little could be saved.



"Finally, there are whispers of something worse...judgment and slavery to fate--that you were a prisoner to the whims of others.

"The only sure truth that survives all telling is this:



"What should never have been cleaved in two was separated forever...

"Husband from wife.
Parent from child.
Arakko from Krakoa.



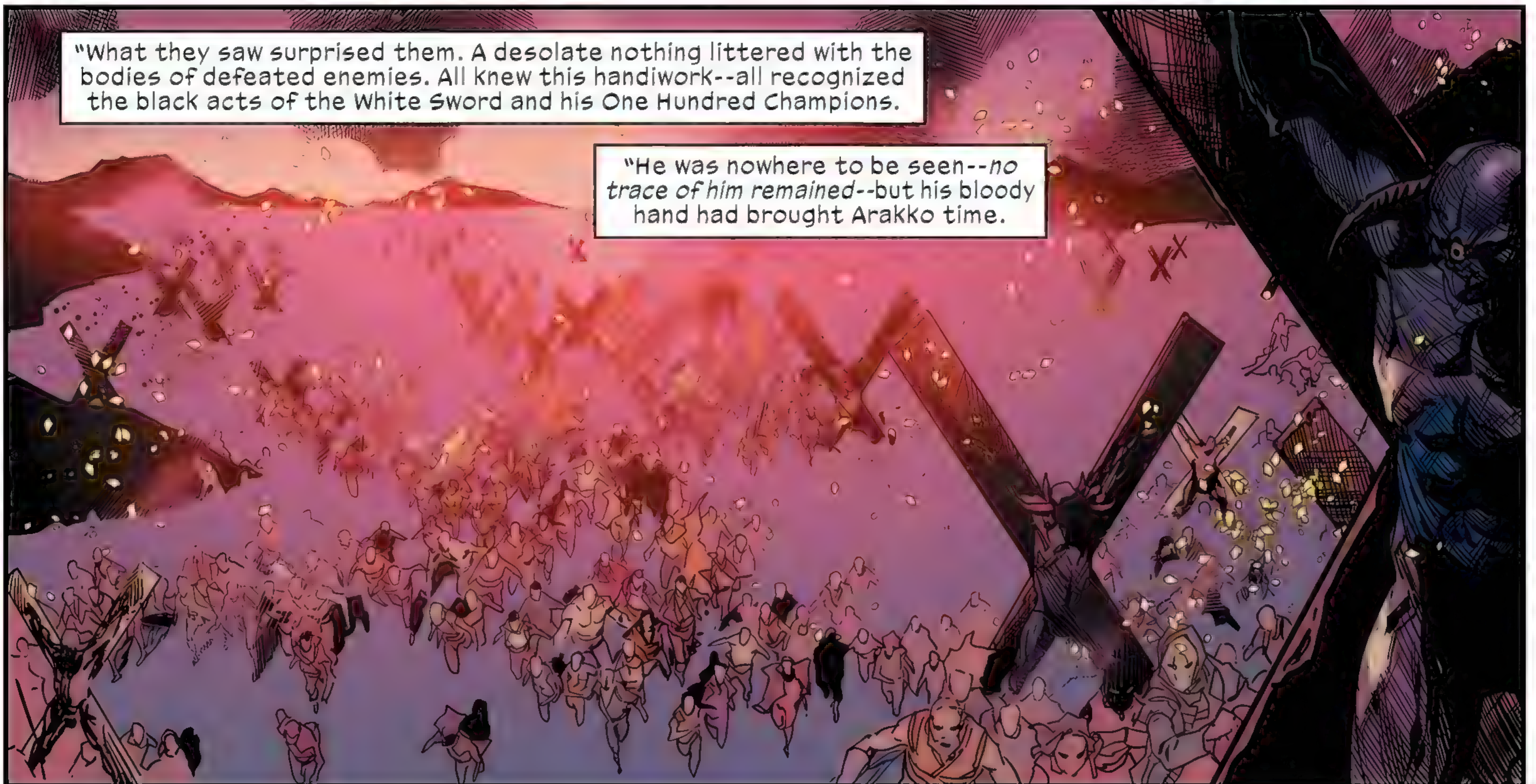
"From one trauma, the mutants of Arakko plunged themselves into the hell of the next one.



"What waited for them was not an army...

"No. For some it meant madness--for the rest it was the wasteland of a world called **Amenth**.

"A black world. A fallen world.



"What they saw surprised them. A desolate nothing littered with the bodies of defeated enemies. All knew this handiwork--all recognized the black acts of the White Sword and his One Hundred Champions.

"He was nowhere to be seen--no trace of him remained--but his bloody hand had brought Arakko time.



"And with that time, we worked wonders.

"It was our age of legends. A miracle of mutantdom. Much of the work done by brave mutant alchemists and engineers still stands to this day.



"Not all, of course. Now only a few remain, but then there were ten towers, and all the land between them was ours.



"When the army of Amenth finally came, we showed them no mercy.

"And for thousands of years, the towers held and the horde died at our border.



"Generations of mutants lived and died never knowing defeat.

"And so, I was born in glory three hundred years ago.



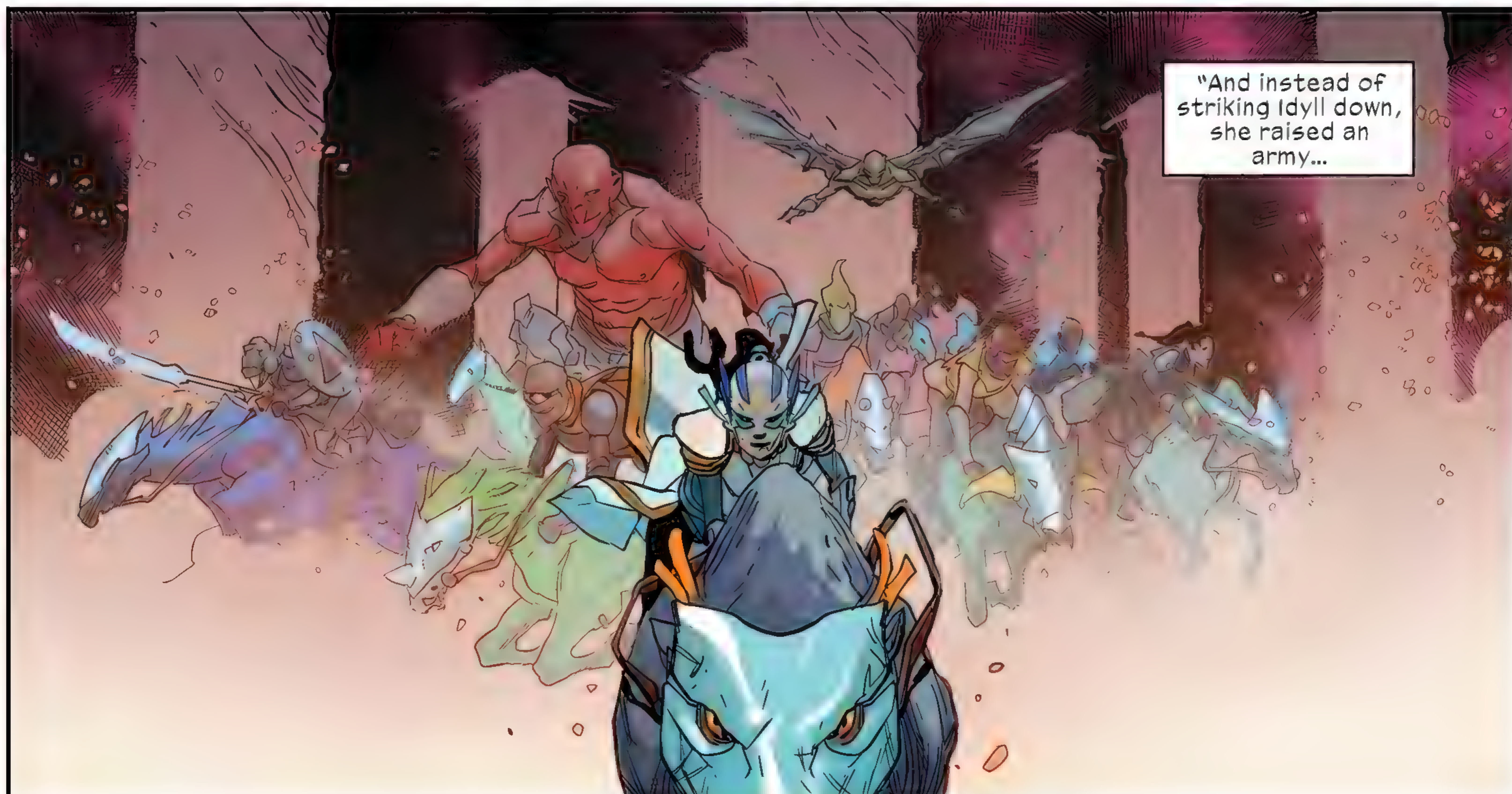
"As a child, all I knew was the world inside our walls.

"It was all any of us knew. It was a special kind of ignorance--living in the only safe place in a world of violence and believing it must be this way for all. We knew nothing of what Amenth truly was.



"When my crib mate, the high mutant prophet Idyll, went blind after seeing the fall of our great towers, people say Genesis laughed at him and threatened to remove his weak head from his weak shoulders.

"Genesis. The authority of Arakko. The mother of Horsemen. The wife of Apocalypse."



"And instead of striking Idyll down, she raised an army...



"They were gone for twenty years. Every few months word would arrive of their conquests--and all of Arakko would celebrate.

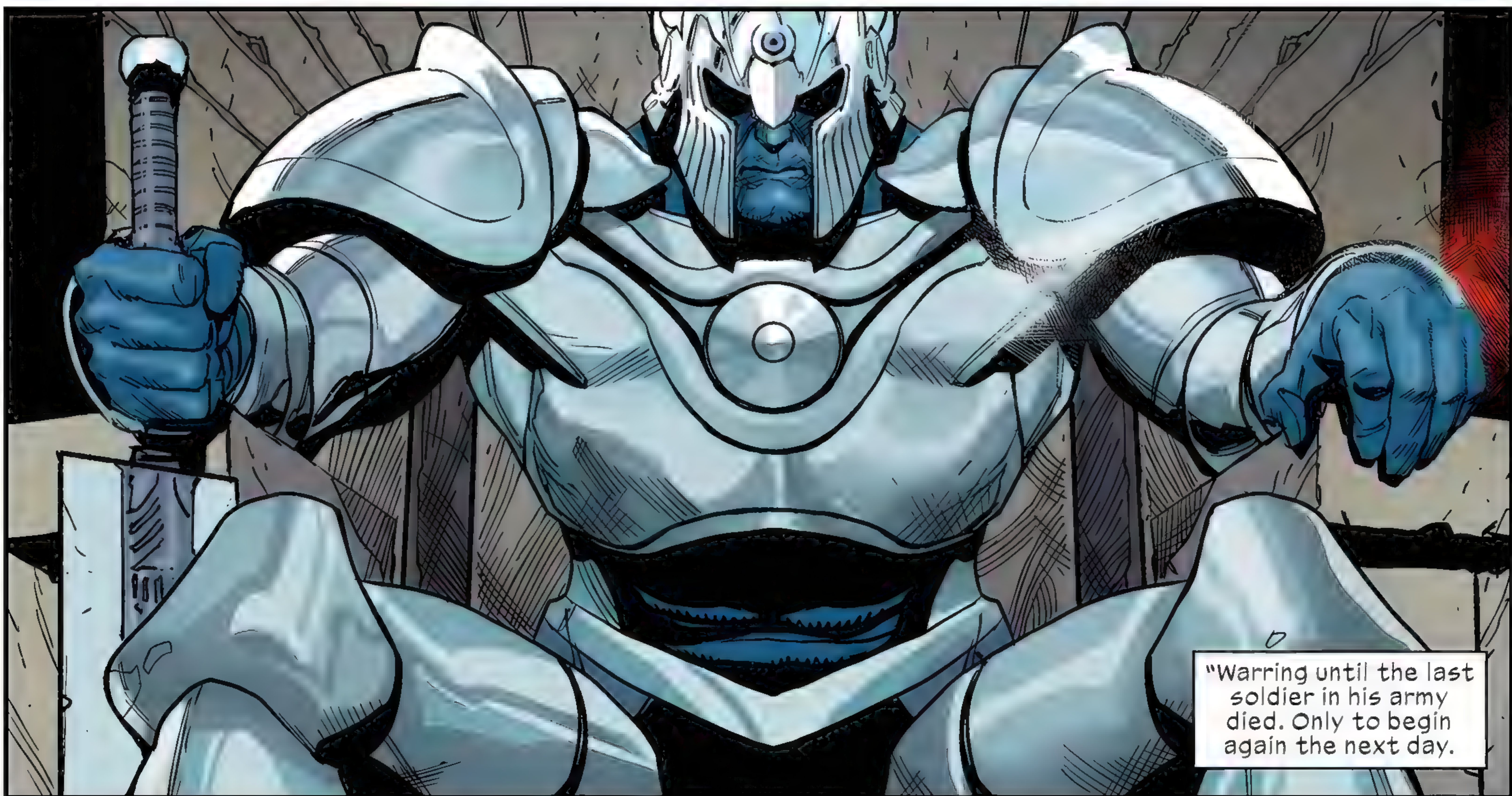
"We feasted on victory--it was our birthright--and Genesis fed us well.

"Then, two centuries ago, our army fell silent.



"Later, we would learn they had reached the Ivory Spire. It was the stronghold of the long-thought lost *White Sword, Purity*.

"He was our greatest healer--immortal...External. Each morning, the White Sword resurrected his one hundred champions and rode out to slaughter Amenthi daemons.



"Warring until the last soldier in his army died. Only to begin again the next day.



"Genesis said that the death and resurrection cycle he lived had become his *religion*.

"She said he had become just as alien as the horde he raged against, and we mutants of Arakko were the same to him.



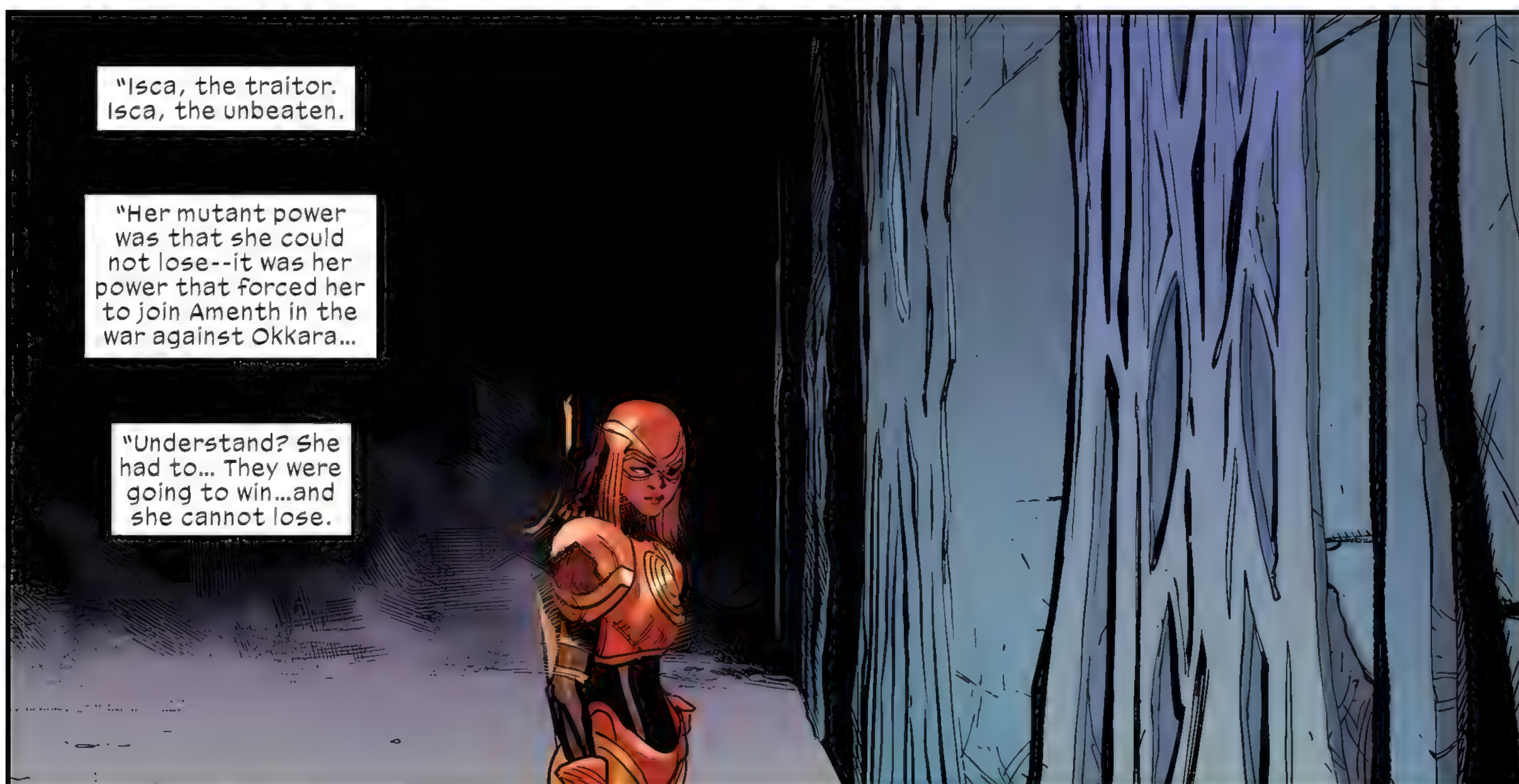
"We tasted our first defeat at the hands of one of our own.



"We heard nothing for six years, and then--having escaped by untold and never spoken means--Genesis and the few mutants who survived returned home to Arakko.



"They returned...only to find more defeat waiting for them."



"Isca, the traitor. Isca, the unbeaten."

"Her mutant power was that she could not lose--it was her power that forced her to join Amenth in the war against Okkara..."

"Understand? She had to... They were going to win...and she cannot lose."



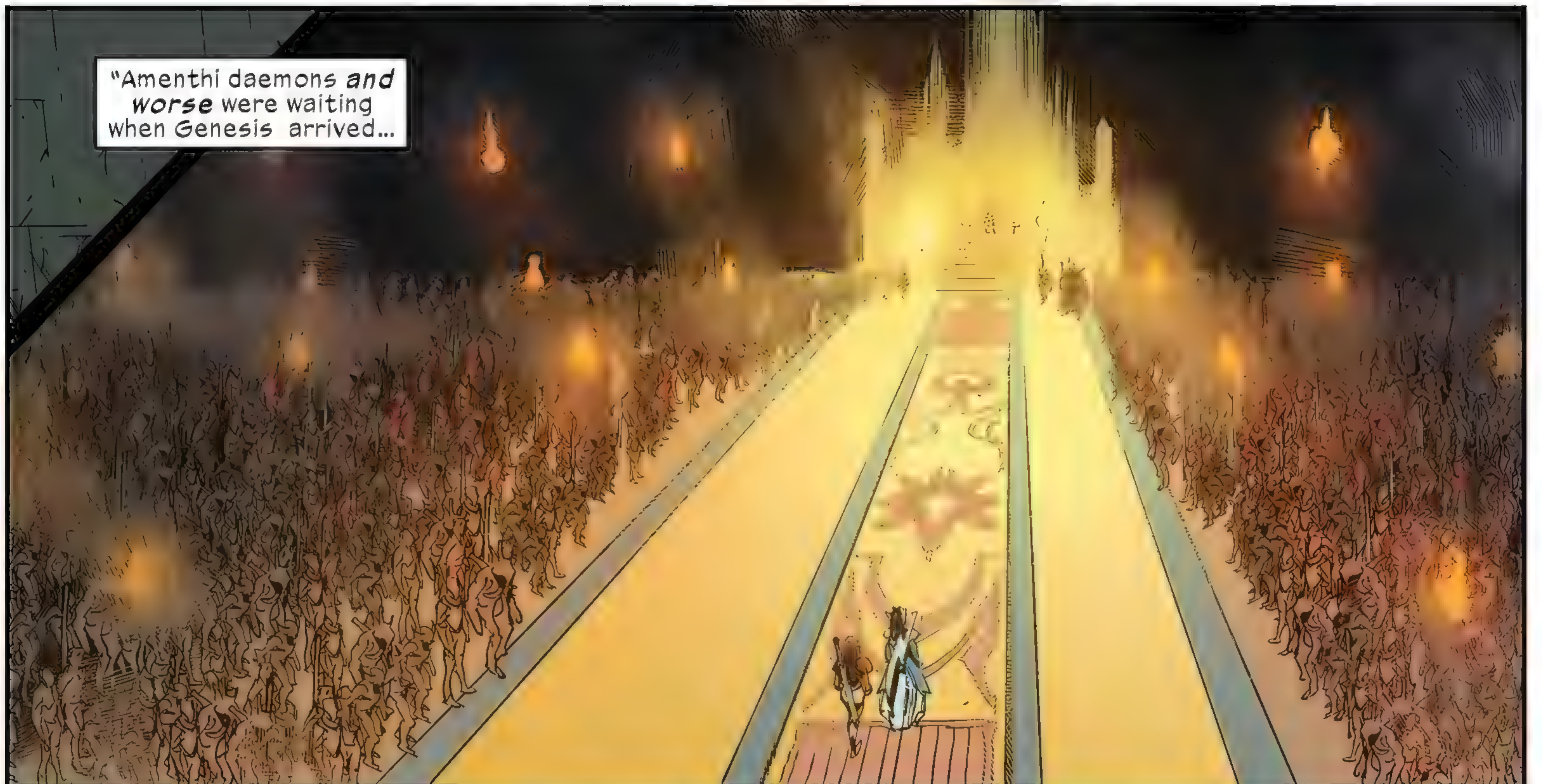
"Isca had been sent to invite Genesis to parlay with Annihilation--the god of Amenth--at the seat of the golden helm's power in the capital city of Amenth."

"No one knows what words passed between them, just that Genesis accepted."



"It is said the great hall of Annihilation was full that day.

"That the full might of Amenth was witnessed for the first time.

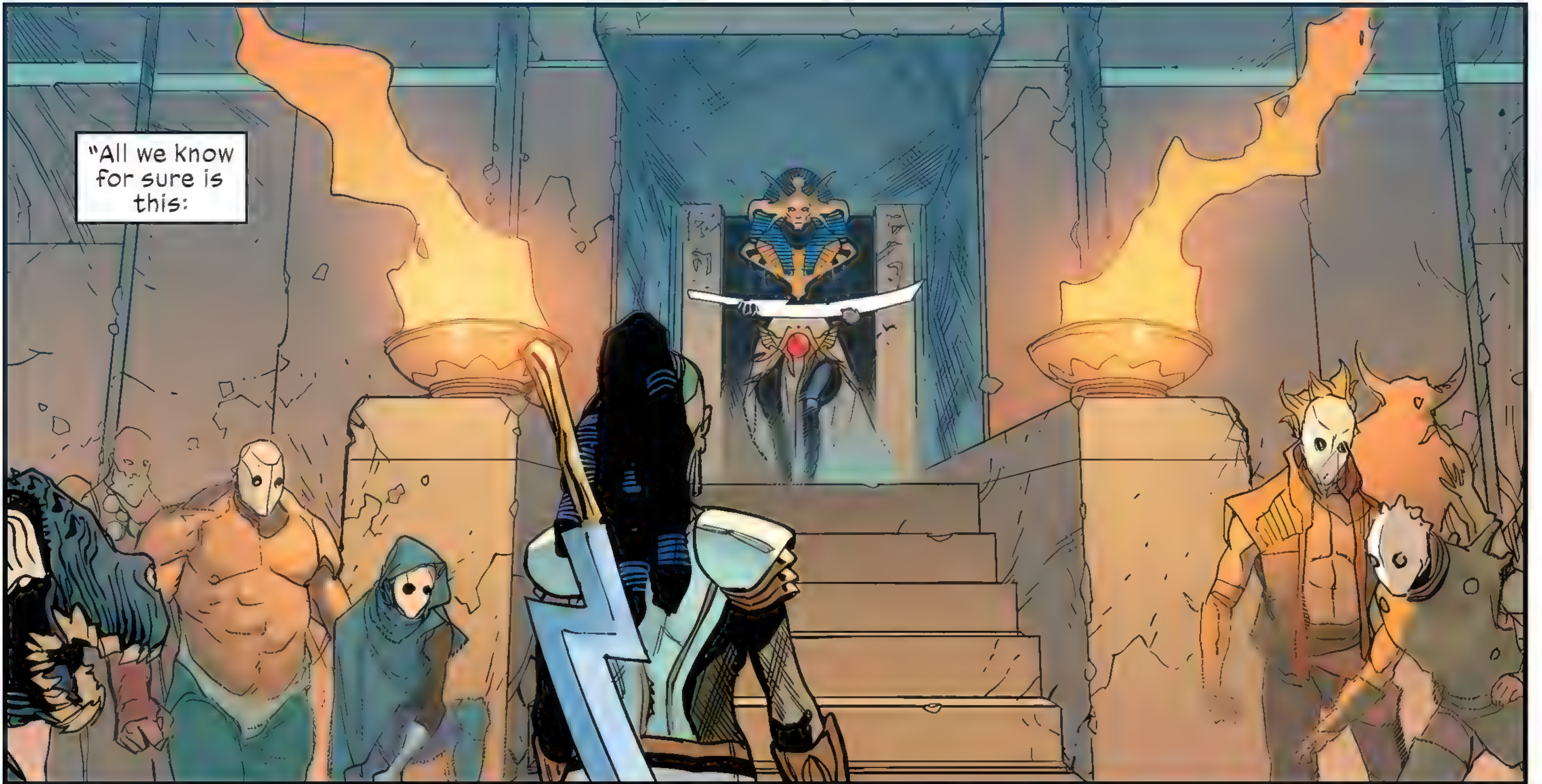


"Amenthi daemons *and worse* were waiting when *Genesis* arrived...



"I wonder, were they silent as *Genesis* approached Annihilation's throne?

"Did they scream and rage? Or did they mock and jeer?



"All we know
for sure is
this:

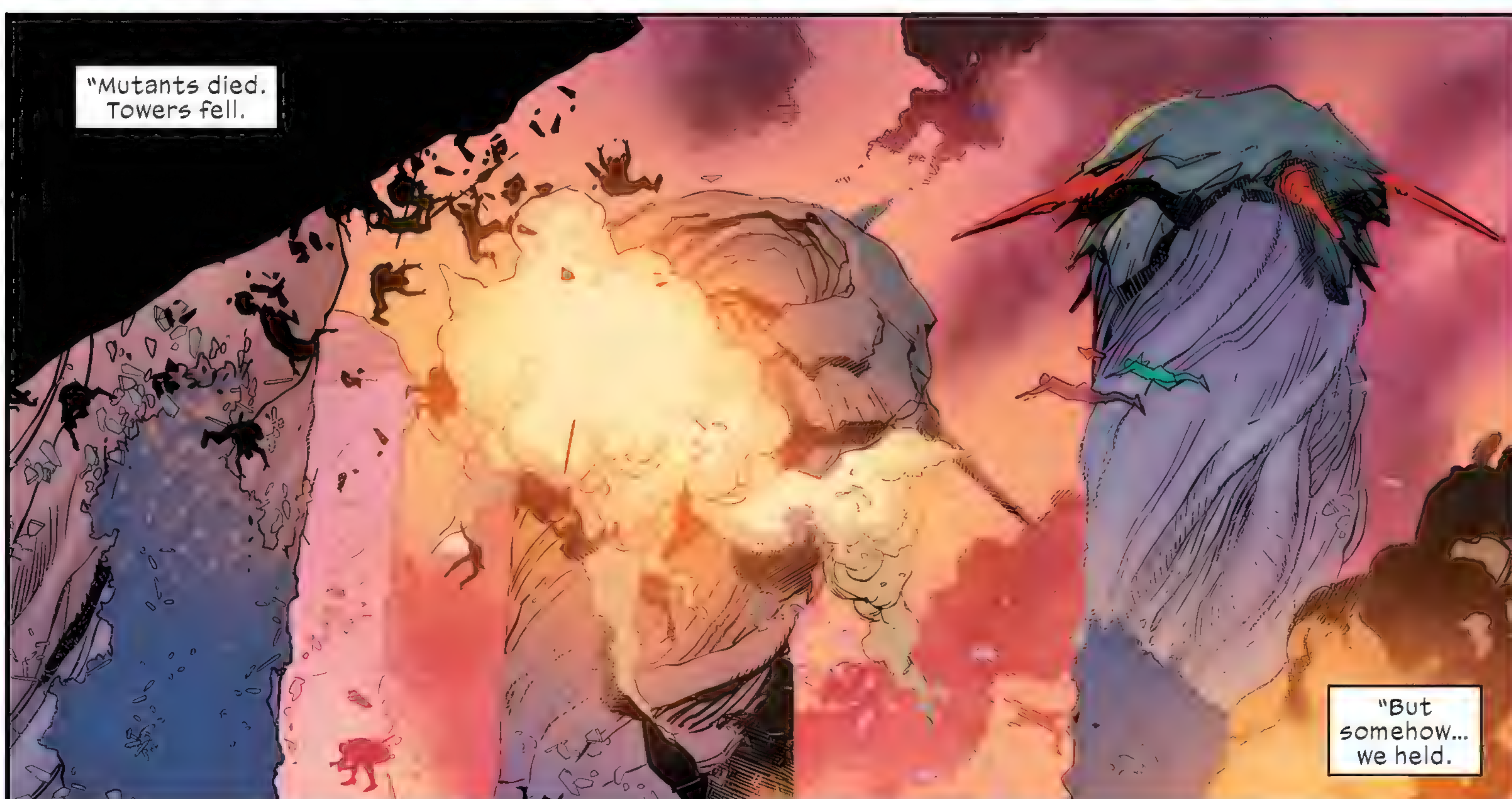


"They battled to
the death with the
fate of Arakko in
the balance.



"They
battled...and
Genesis was
found wanting.
Defeated. Unfit.
And buried.

"And buried with
her was all hope
for Arakko.



"Because there was still hope--hope that somewhere out there you had raised a new mutant society, a greater one--and with it, a mutant army that could save us all.



"We held out...until we couldn't any longer.



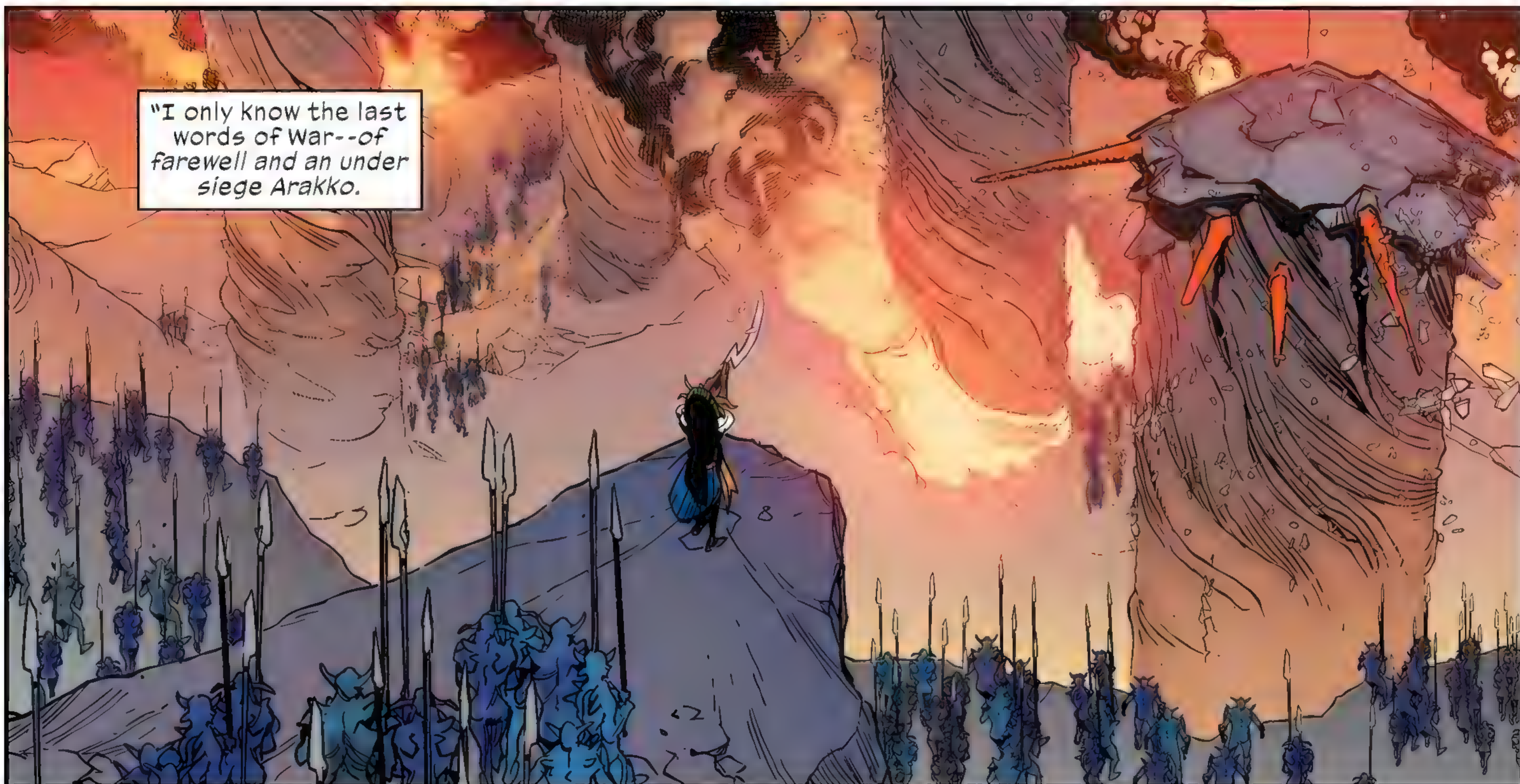
"I was sent ahead to find you...





"Others sought out
a different kind of
salvation..."

"But I know
nothing of
their success
or failure..."



"I only know the last
words of War--of
farewell and an under
siege Arakko."



"Grandfather--great
Apocalypse--we are
out of time."

"Amenth is on
the march..."

"...and only you can *save us*."

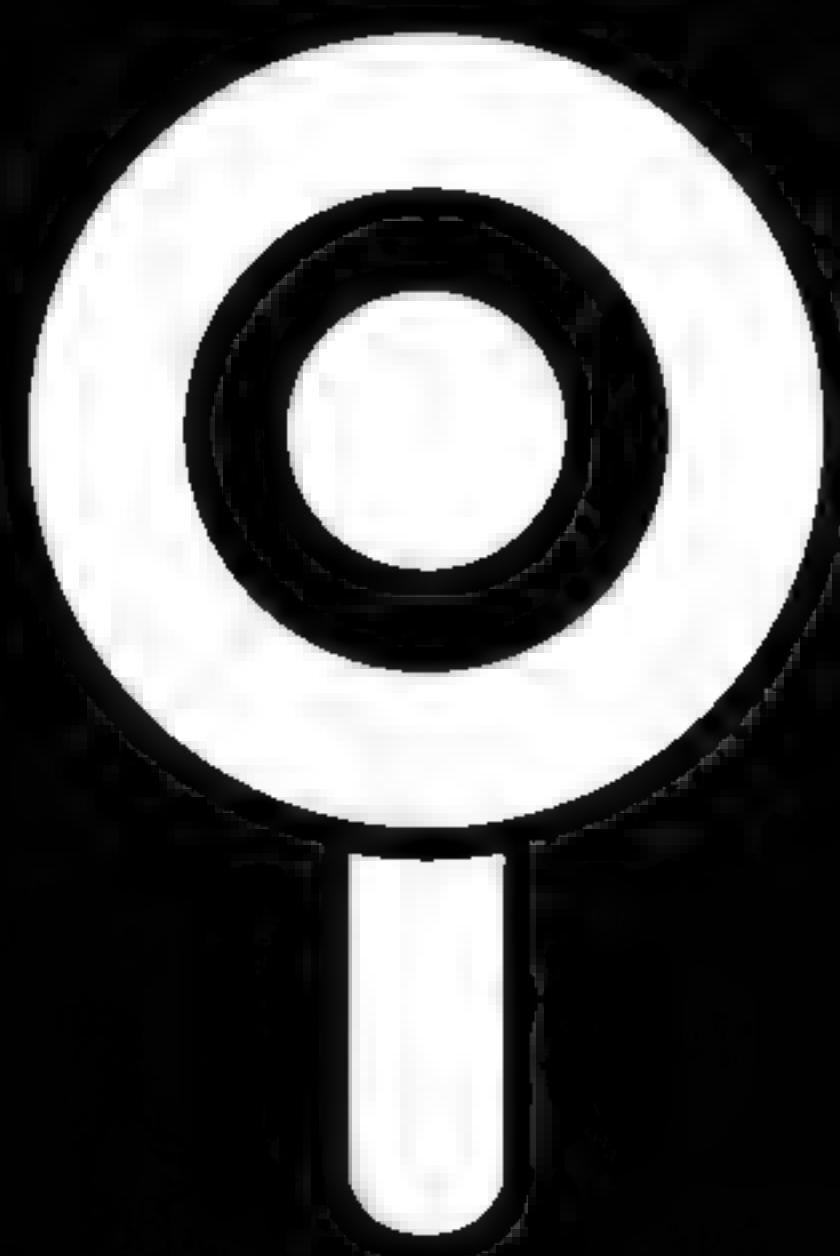


SUMMONERS OF AMENTH

Behold the power of the Summoner school of Amenth. They are nameless adepts and ageless wizards of the black world and can touch that dark place hidden to most practitioners.

Know a Summoner by their mark, which they must wear at all times. See the mark and know them -- not by any other sight, any words or any deeds.

They serve an alien power. A lure deeper than their connection to the waking world. Remember this, and act accordingly.



SUMMONER MINOR

Traditional Number:
600 [CURRENTLY: 350]

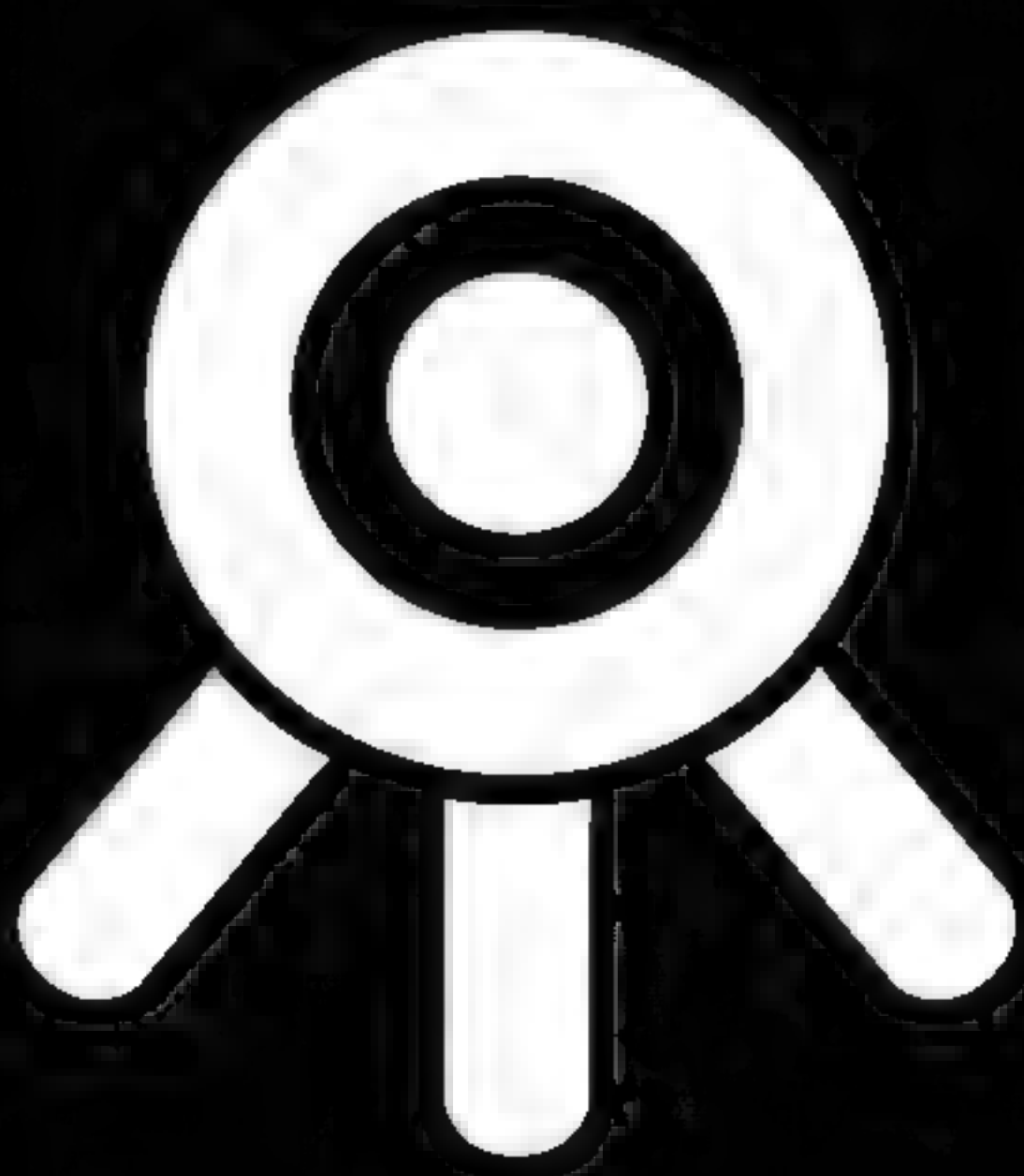
Able to summon a single host or minor daemon.



SUMMONER ADEPT

Number:
30 [CURRENTLY: 22]

Able to summon a small horde of minor daemons or one major elemental.



HIGH SUMMONER

Number:
3 [CURRENTLY: 2]

Able to summon a horde of elementals and up to three major daemons.

Later.

Here it is...

As I said...the price was paid--I have done the work.

I have built the External Gate.

Unus the Untouchable and Banshee will accompany--and protect--you across **Otherworld** to **Arakko**.

I'm a traveling man, always happy to see the sights.

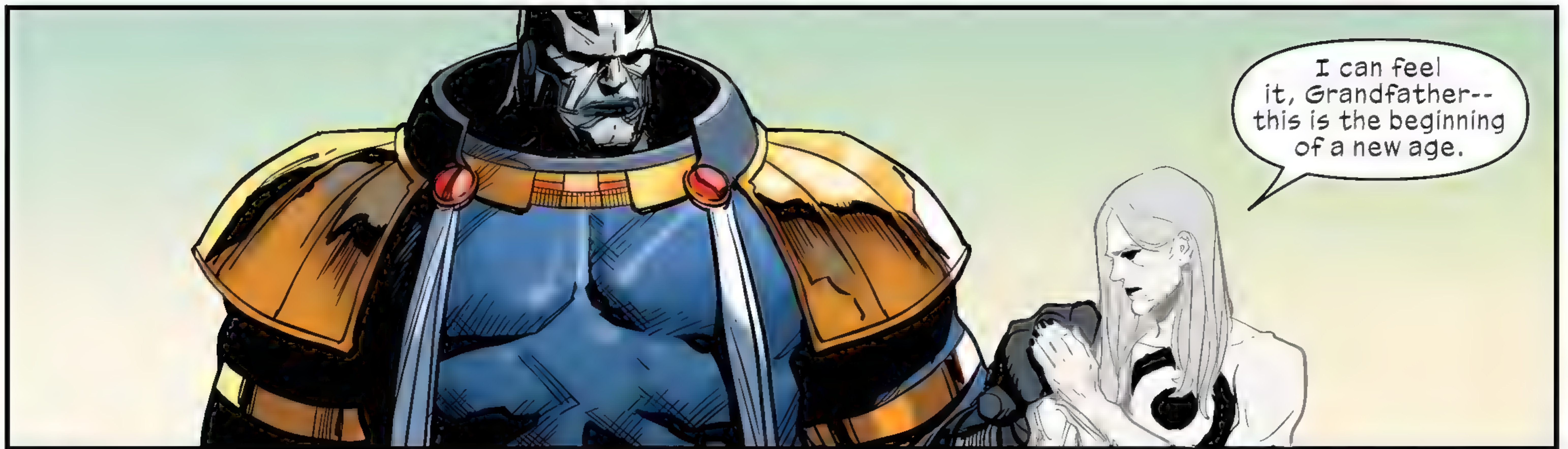
I want you to find our path and herald my return...

...and as you do, I will marshal the might of Krakoa to rescue Arakko and heal that which was wounded so long ago.

However, if you find that Arakko has fallen...then return quickly...

So that you might save any survivors? Rescue any enslaved?

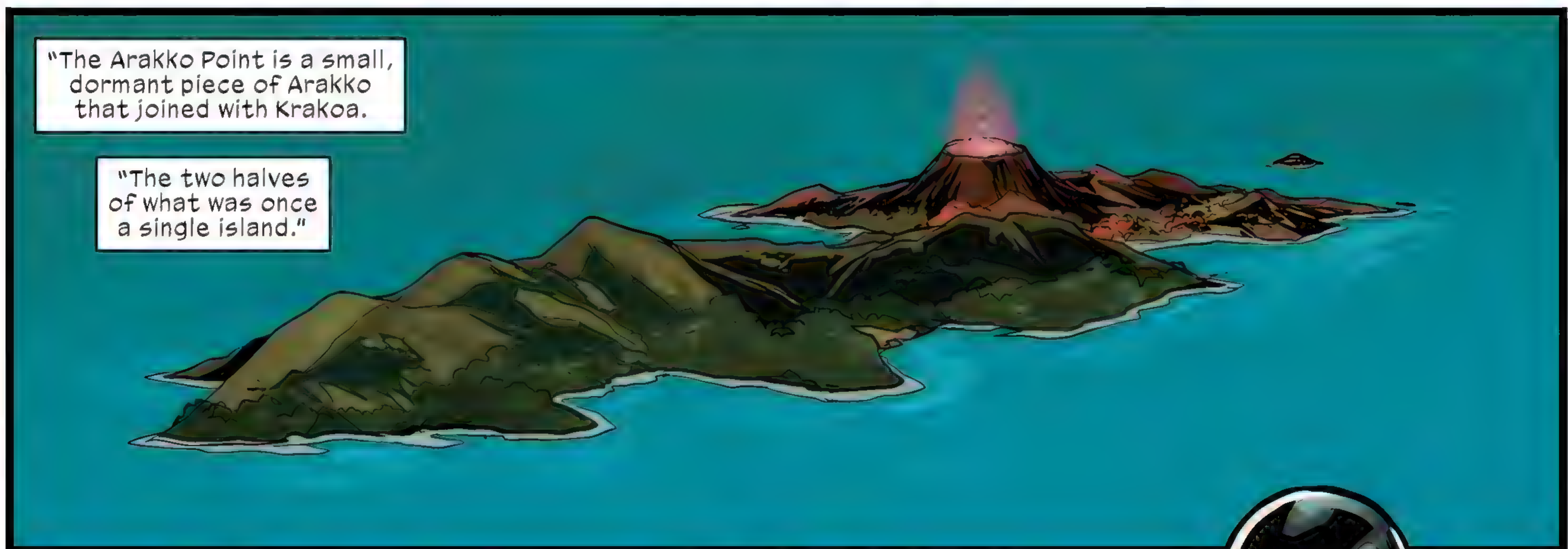
That... and have my long-awaited **revenge**.





Sworded Out

18





"Right now, Krakoa is pushing the Arakko Point away from itself--disengaging the smaller island..."



"...because that's where the *External Gate* is located."



"Which--by inverting the gate--is supposedly how we're going to get the whole of Arakko here."



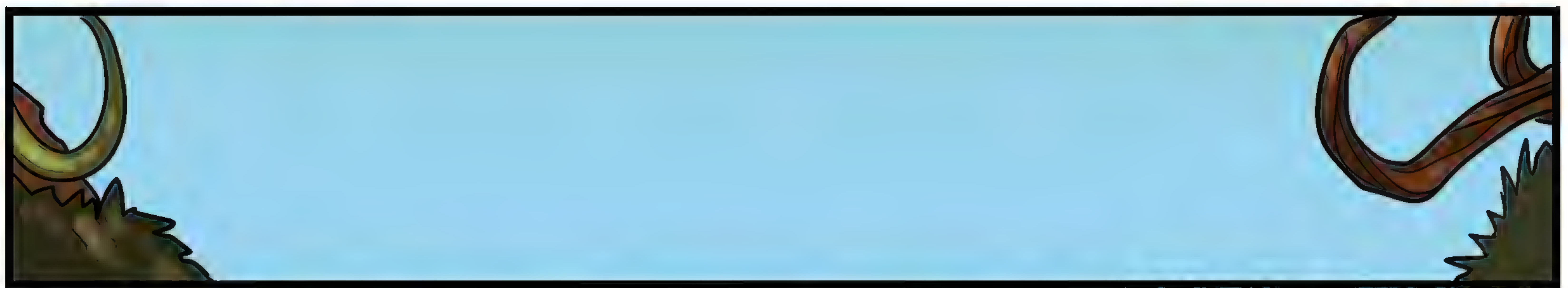
Okay. Sure.

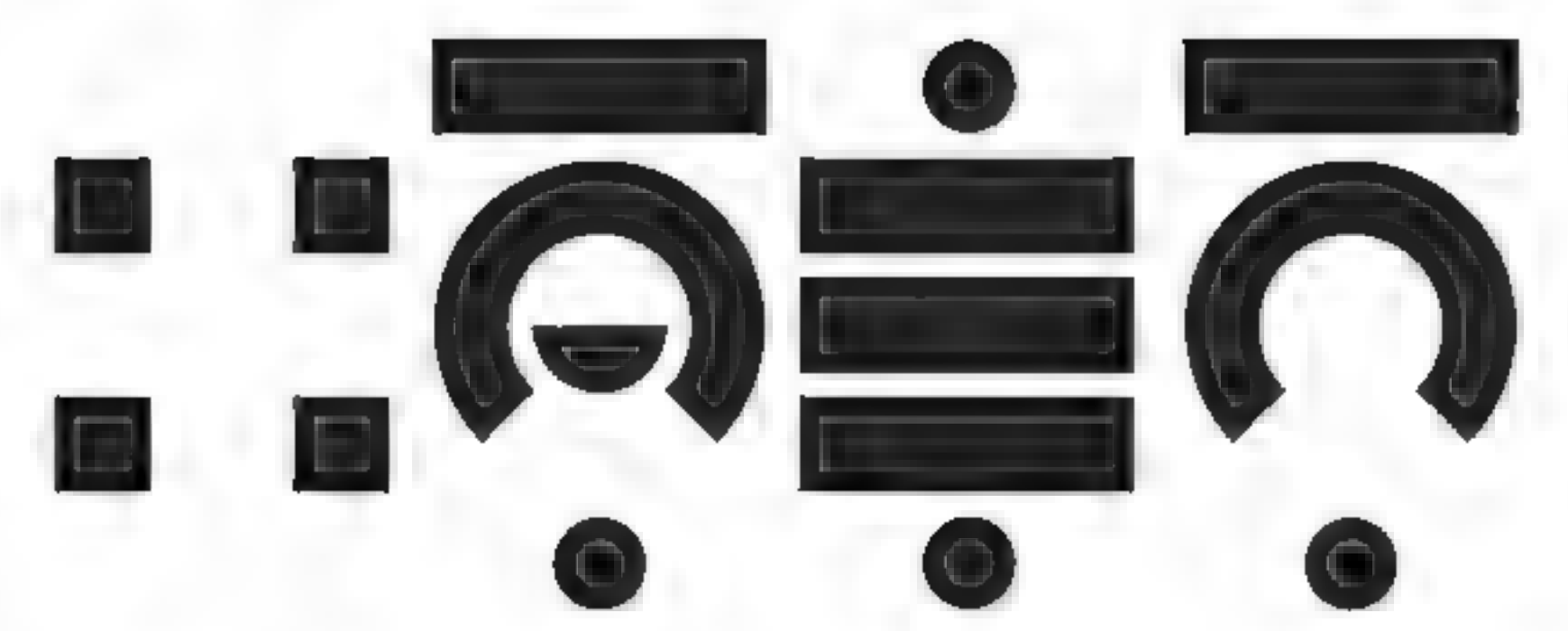
But, again...how's that work?

Honestly, I have no idea.









TWO ISLANDS

Following a tournament of swords, the island of Krakoa is reuniting with its long-lost other half, Arakko -- but what that means for mutantkind, both Krakoan and Arakkii, remains to be seen...



Cyclops



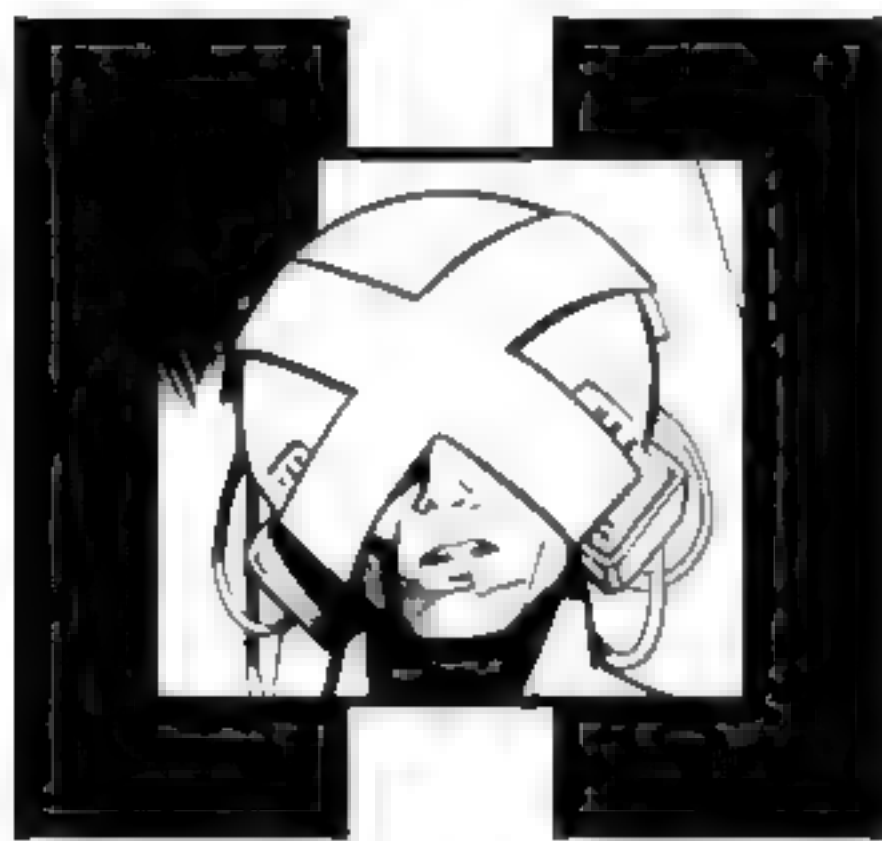
Rachel Summers



Cable



Cypher



Professor X



Kate Pryde



Magneto



Emma Frost



Mystique



Exodus



Nightcrawler



Sebastian Shaw



Mister Sinister



Storm



Isca the Unbeaten



Jean Grey

*Chapters 12-15 can be found in X OF SWORDS.

Later.

<So how do you want to do this?>

<Carrier pigeon? Do you even know what that is? Megaphone? There are other options...>



ბოლომ
შეგზავნი.

<I don't know how I'm supposed to-->

შეგიძლება
შეგზავნი
შეგზავნი

ბოლომ
შეგზავნი.

<What do you mean, meet in the middle?>



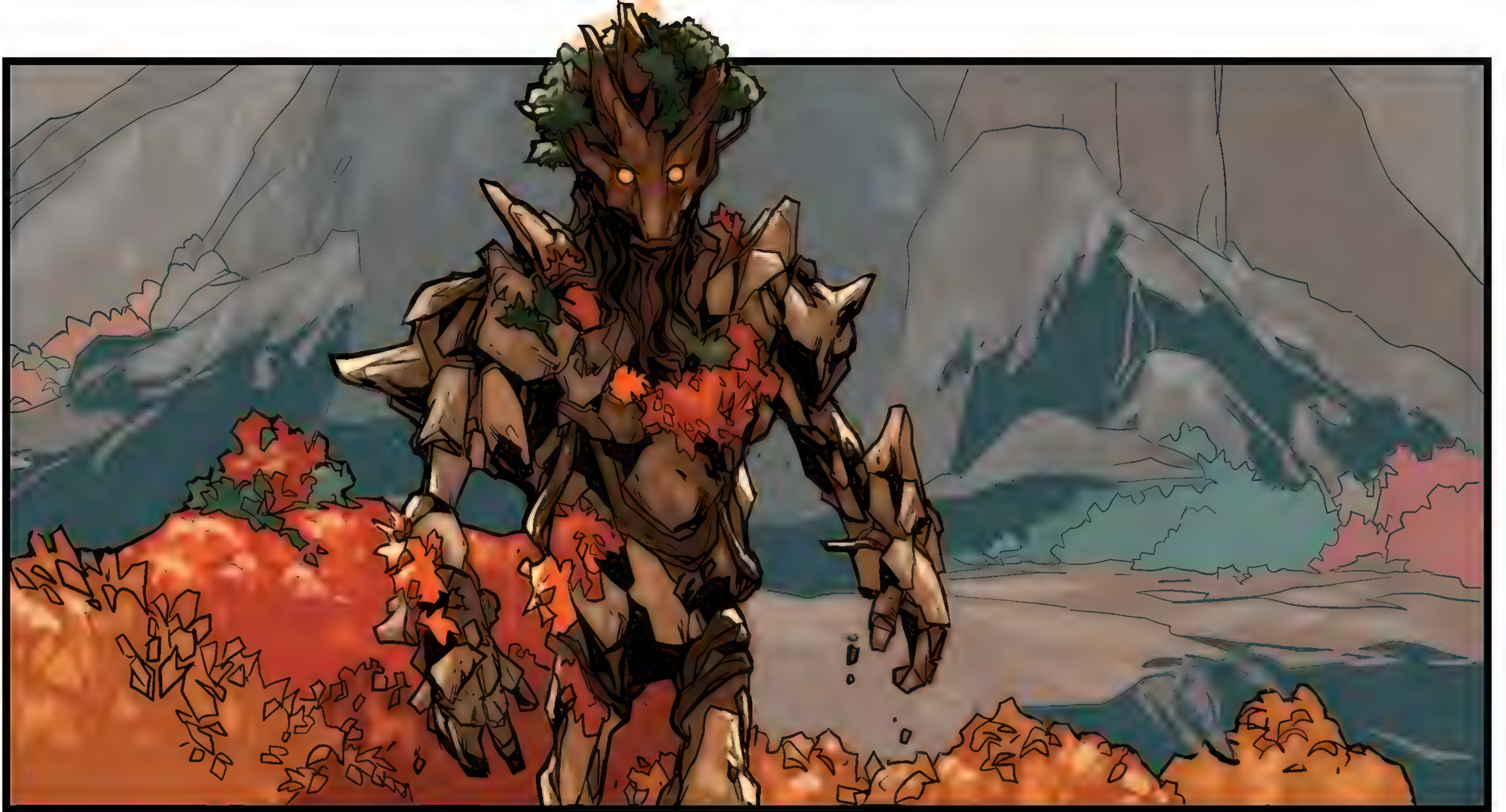
<Oh...>

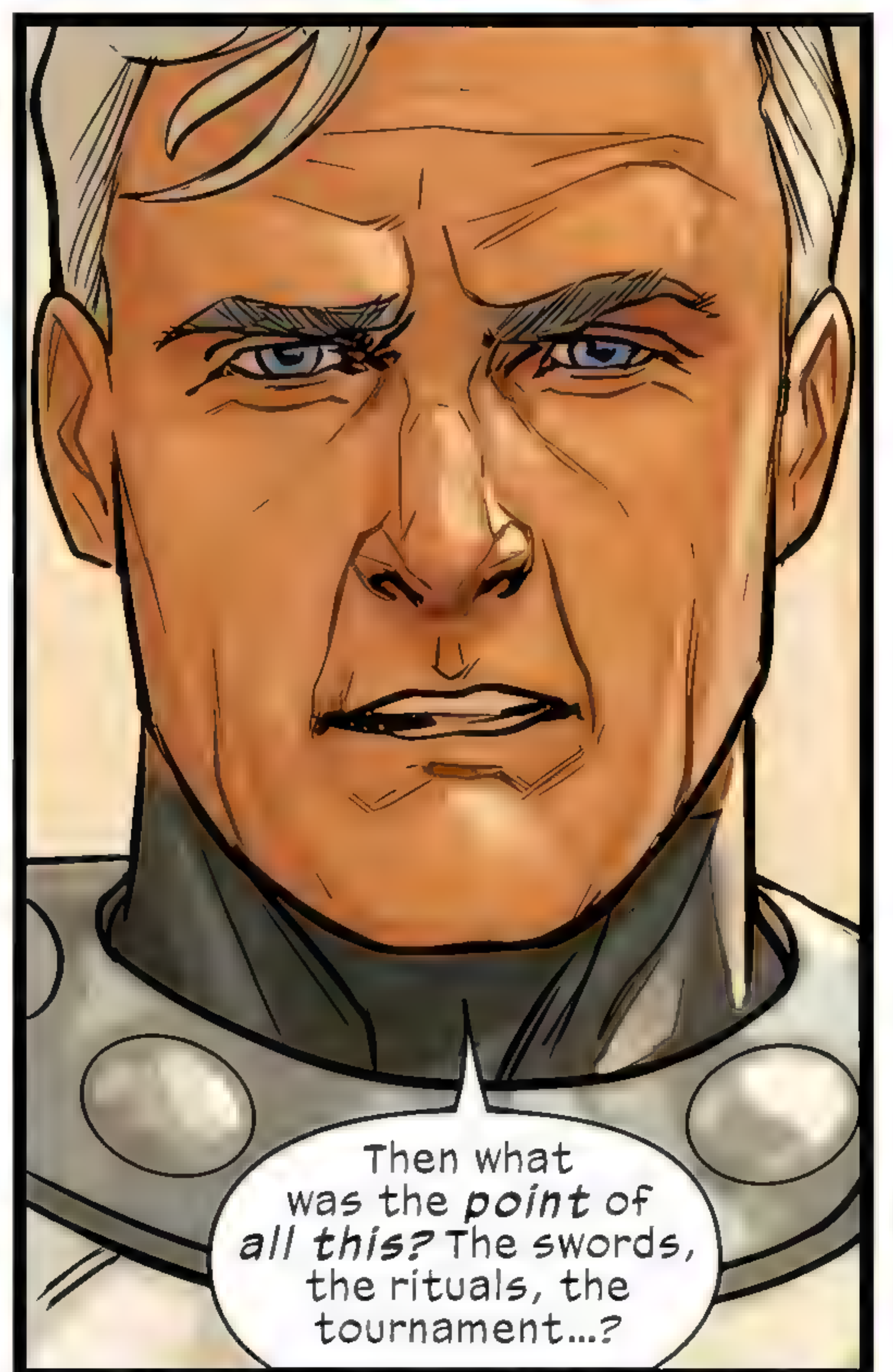
<Okay.>

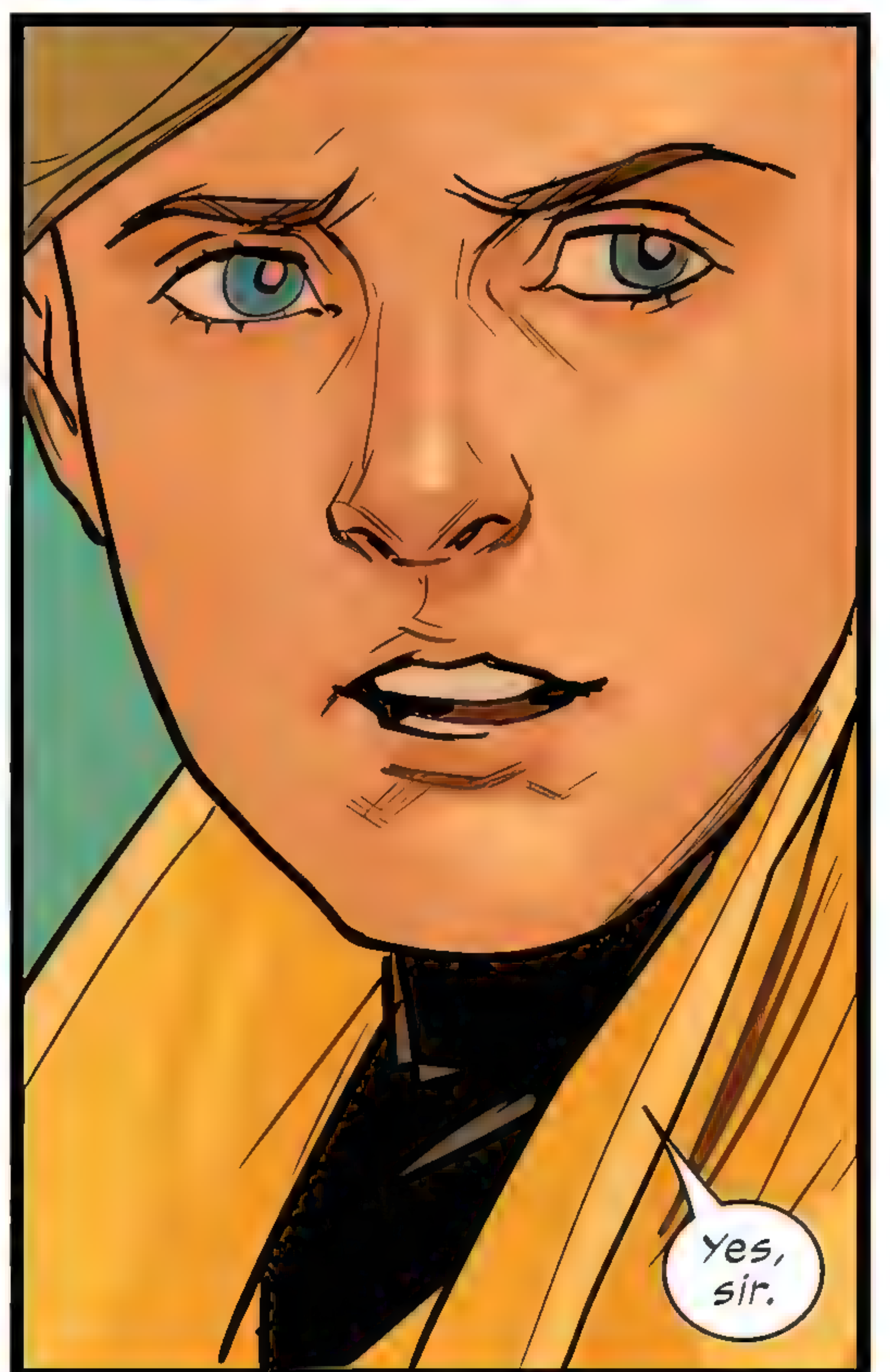
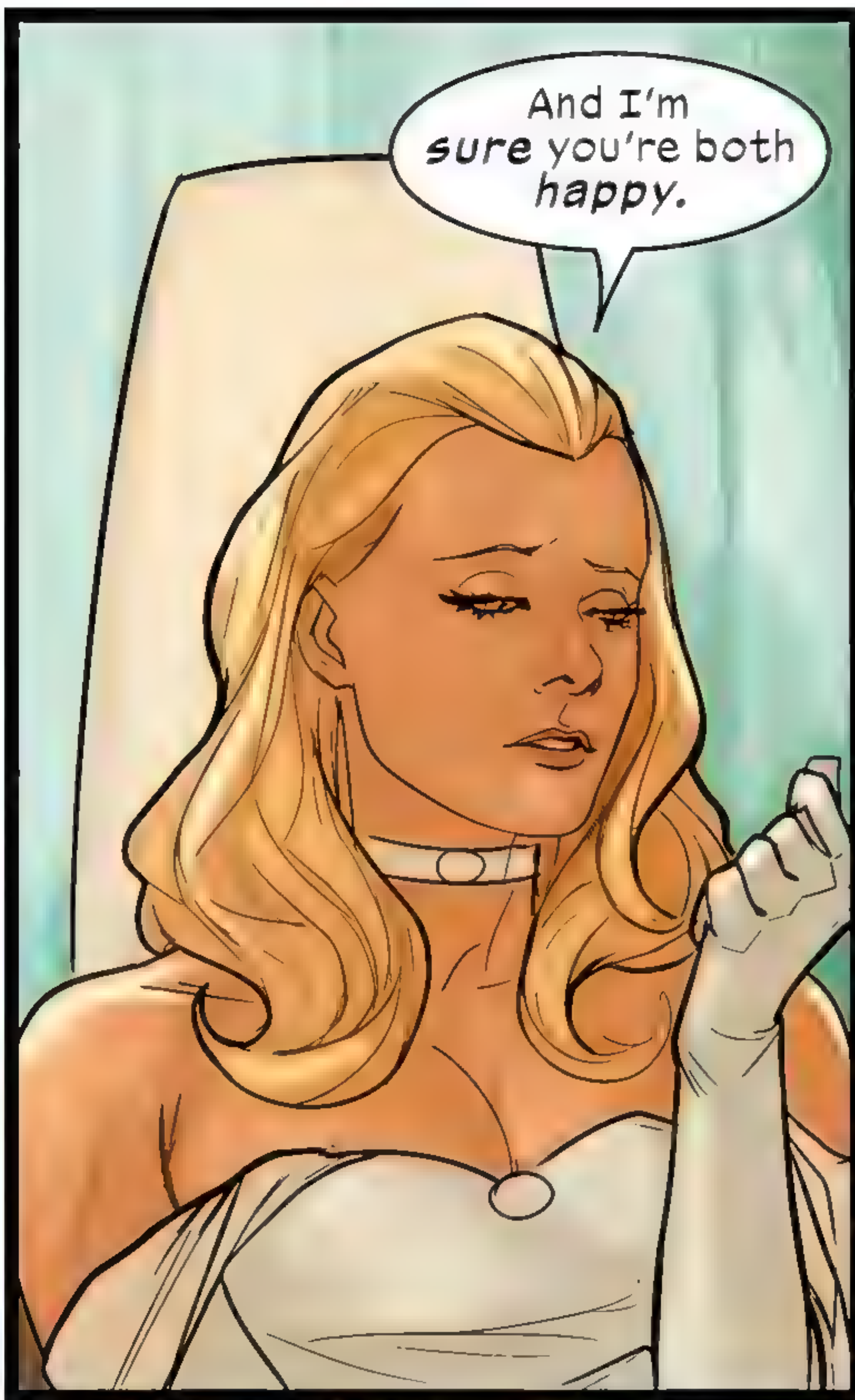


"<I get
it now.>"











What about you, Sinister?

You must have some insight into all this since you are, in fact, the only person in this room with experience on that island.

Care to illuminate us?



I'd rather not. I've been through a lot, and I don't want to talk about it.



Douglas, can you please--please--ask Krakoa if there is any way that our two islands can find some common ground?



...
=Sigh=

<Are you sure you won't change your mind?>

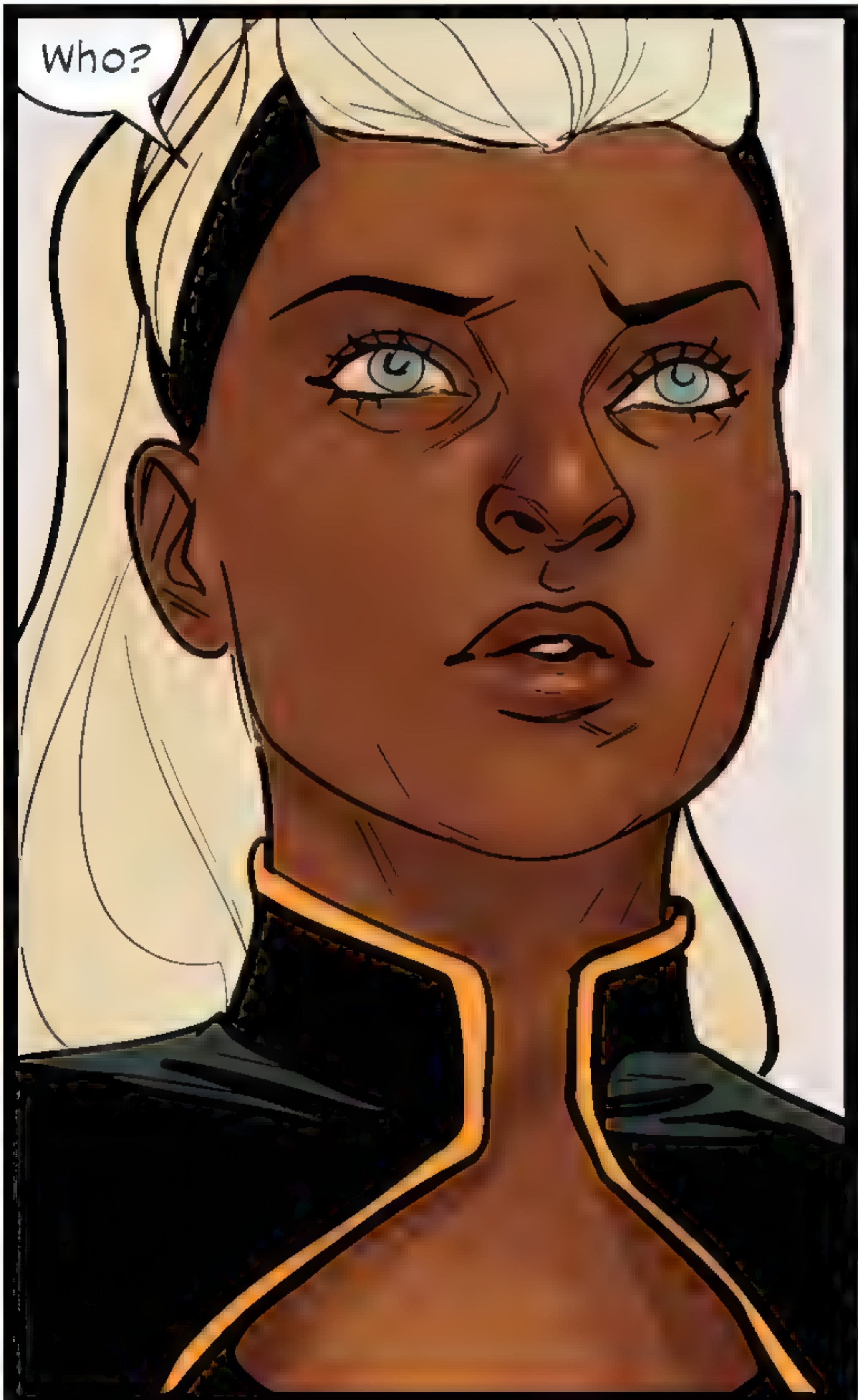


ᲛᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ.



He says it's not really a problem on our end, sir. It's the other island and its intractability.

I really can't stress how different they sound. I think it might extend to all of them as well.



Who?

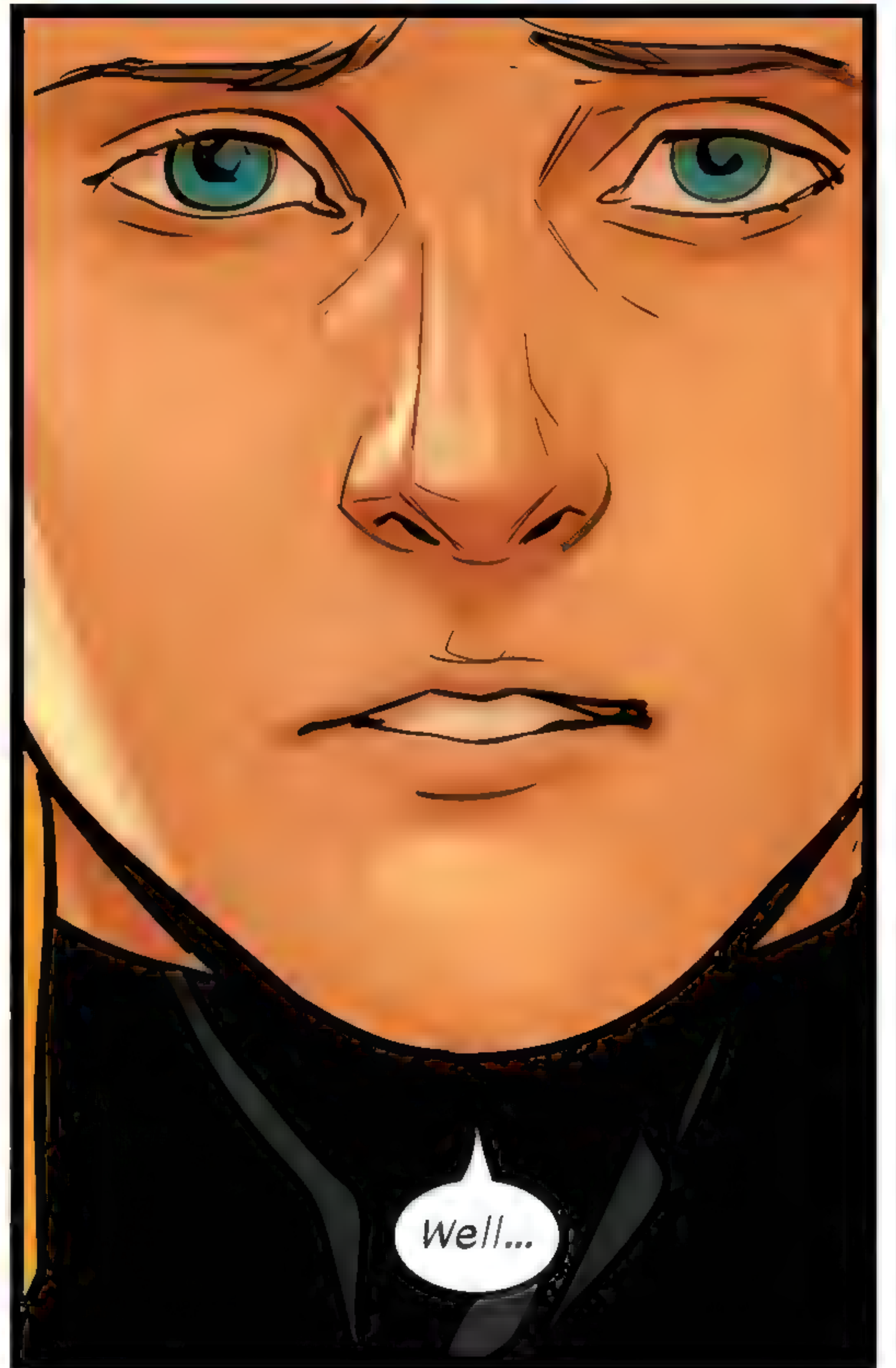


The mutants on Arakko.

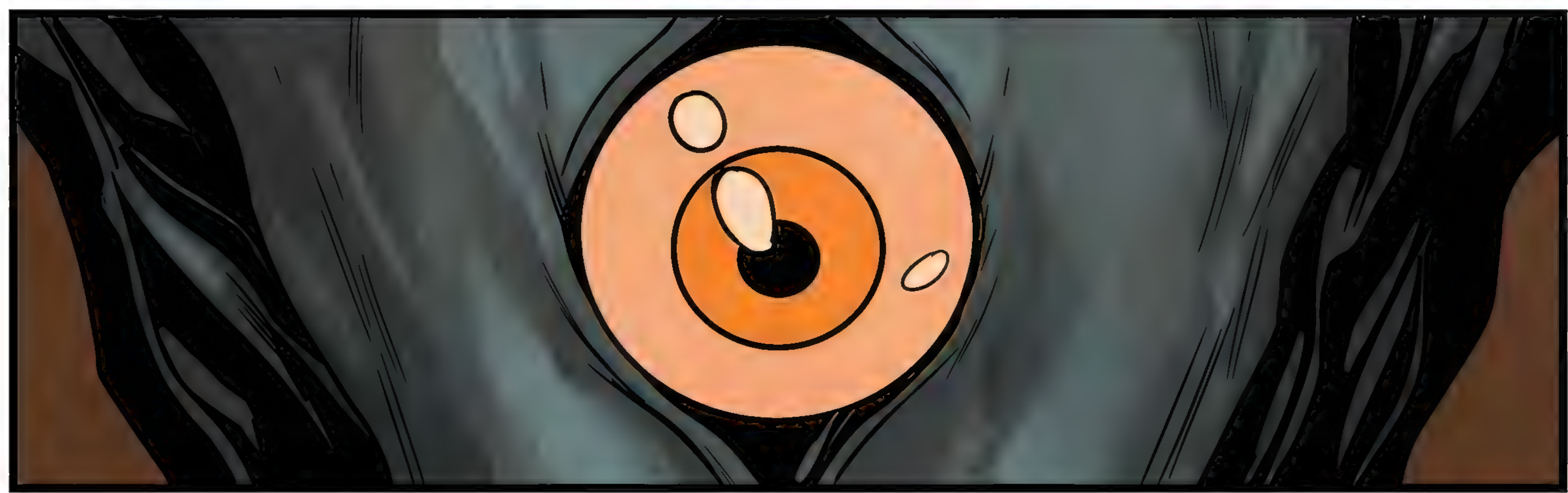
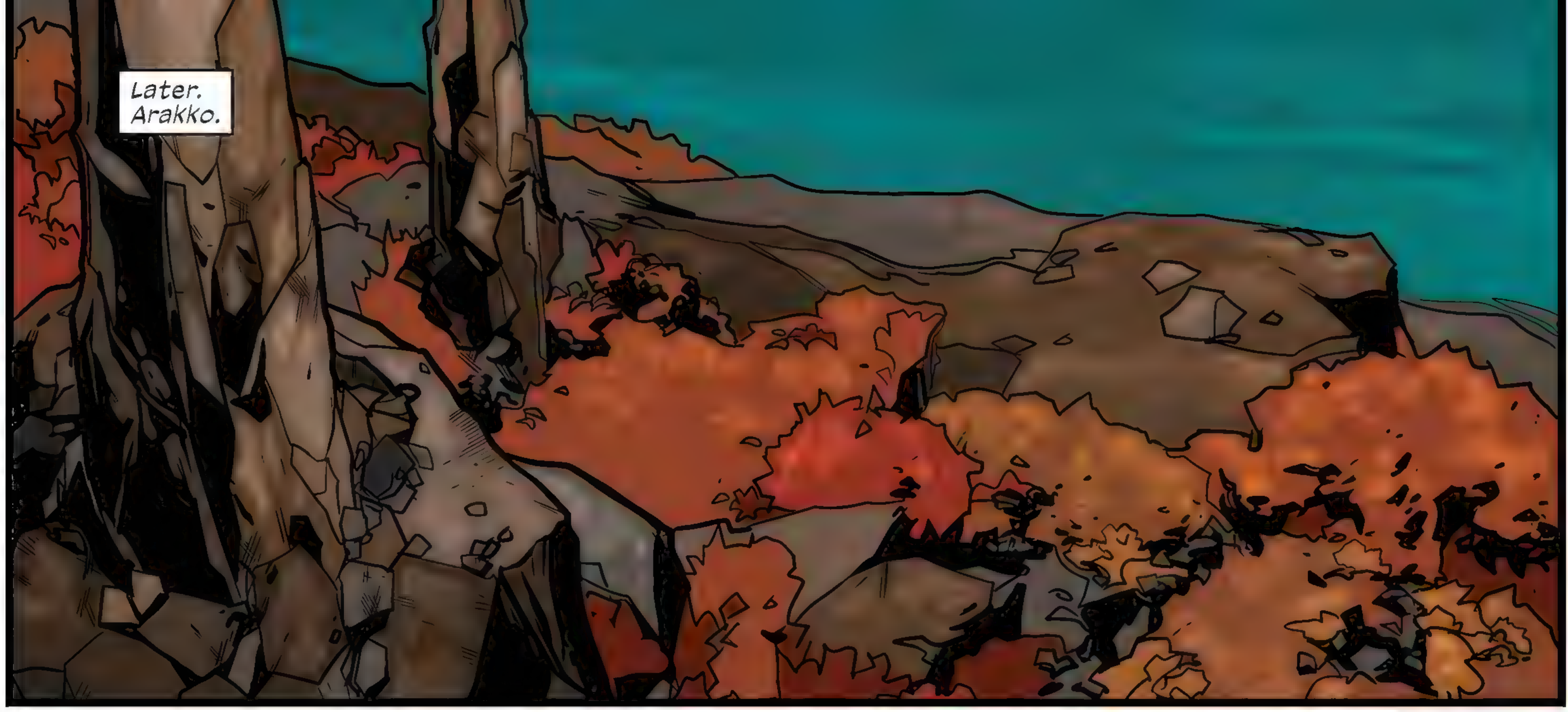


Ach. So easily forgotten when you've never matched a name to a face.

There's virtually no reference to them in any of the reports we've seen...



Later.
Arakko.





I assume you don't know much of the creatures of Amenth.

You have to root them out entirely. These... demons...reproduce asexually, and if you leave one alive, in a month it will have bred an entire pack.



This is how the fallen world was. Yes, everything can kill you, but any apathy would kill you just as surely as tooth and claw.

So we make sure, understand? Leave no enemy alive. Ever.



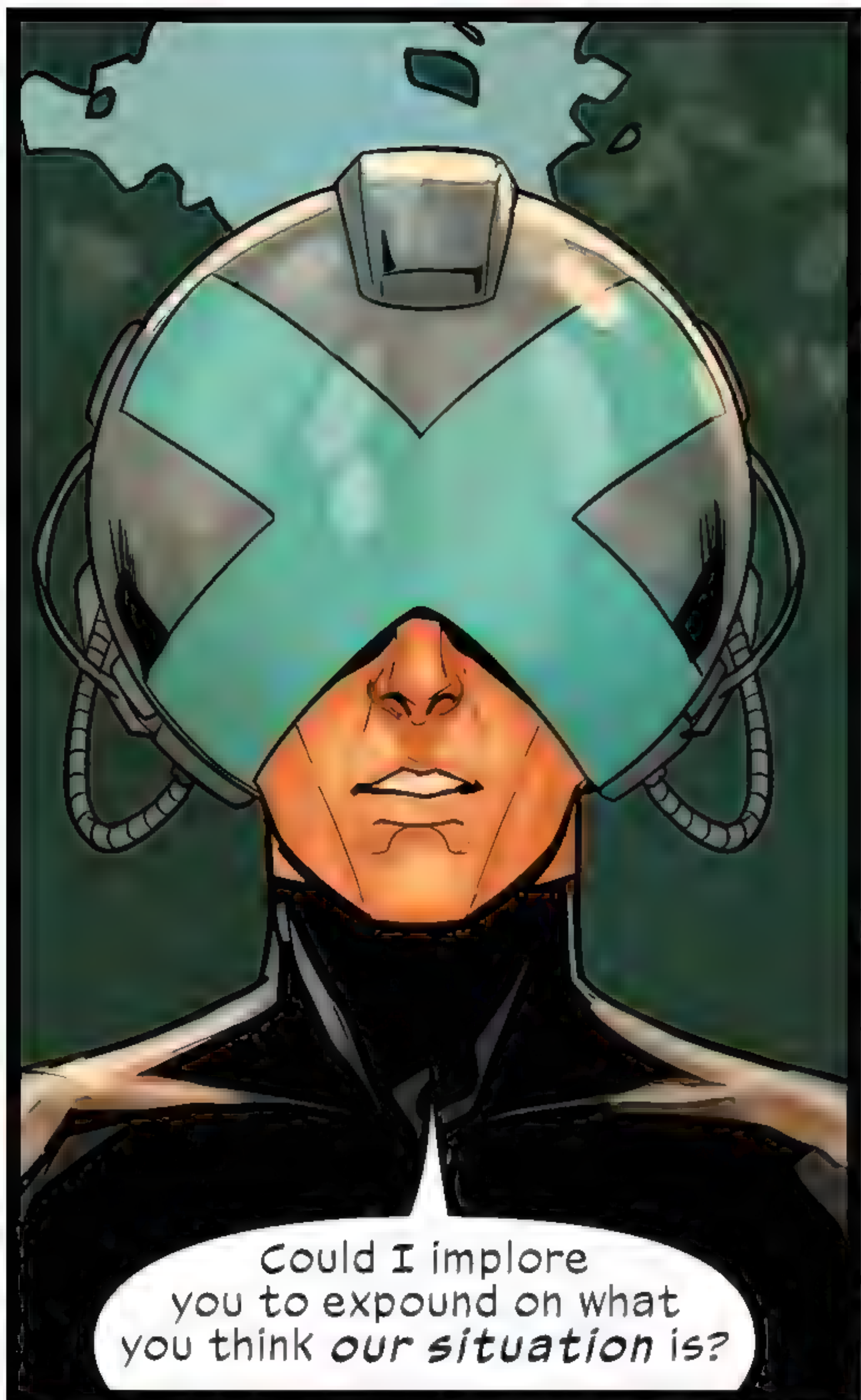
Understood. You can never be too careful, I always say. Charles here, however, is a hopeless romantic.

It's unfortunate, I know. He's quick to trust and gives a wide berth.



I'll keep that in mind.

So how do you wish to proceed with...our situation?



Could I implore you to expound on what you think *our situation* is?



I have spoken with the boy-husband of Bei-- your Cypher has informed me of the intentions of Arakko--the islands will remain two lands.

The question is, what of our two peoples?



Ah. Of course. But before we get into that, we brought you a gift. A *gateway flower*.

It will enable you to travel from Arakko to Krakoa without having to cross the water.



To ease our travel.

For... *comfort*.



Yes. As to the other, do you have a proposal? Intentions beyond peace or some kind of unification?

We were hoping for a coalition or to offer some kind of shared power structure between us.



The *Great Ring* of Arakko is the government here. And beyond the fallow years, it has been so for thousands of years. What of yours?



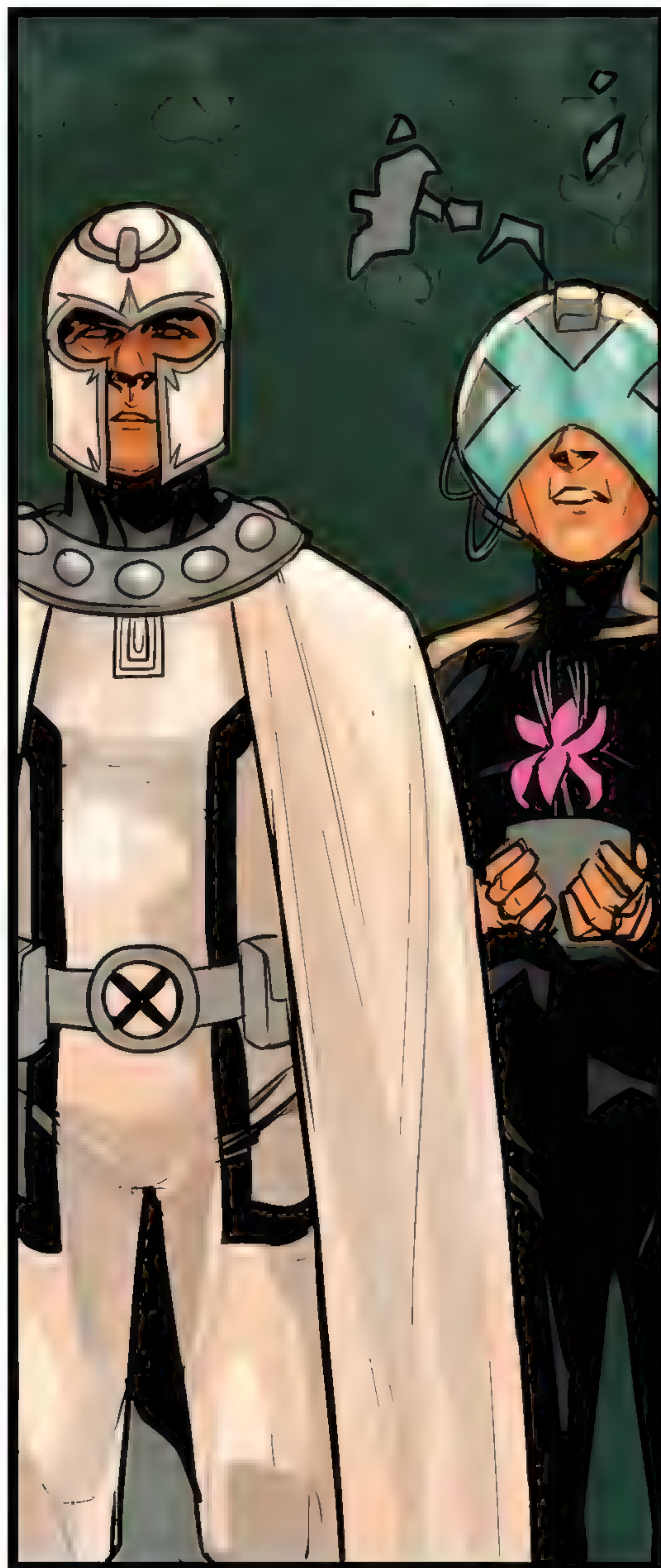
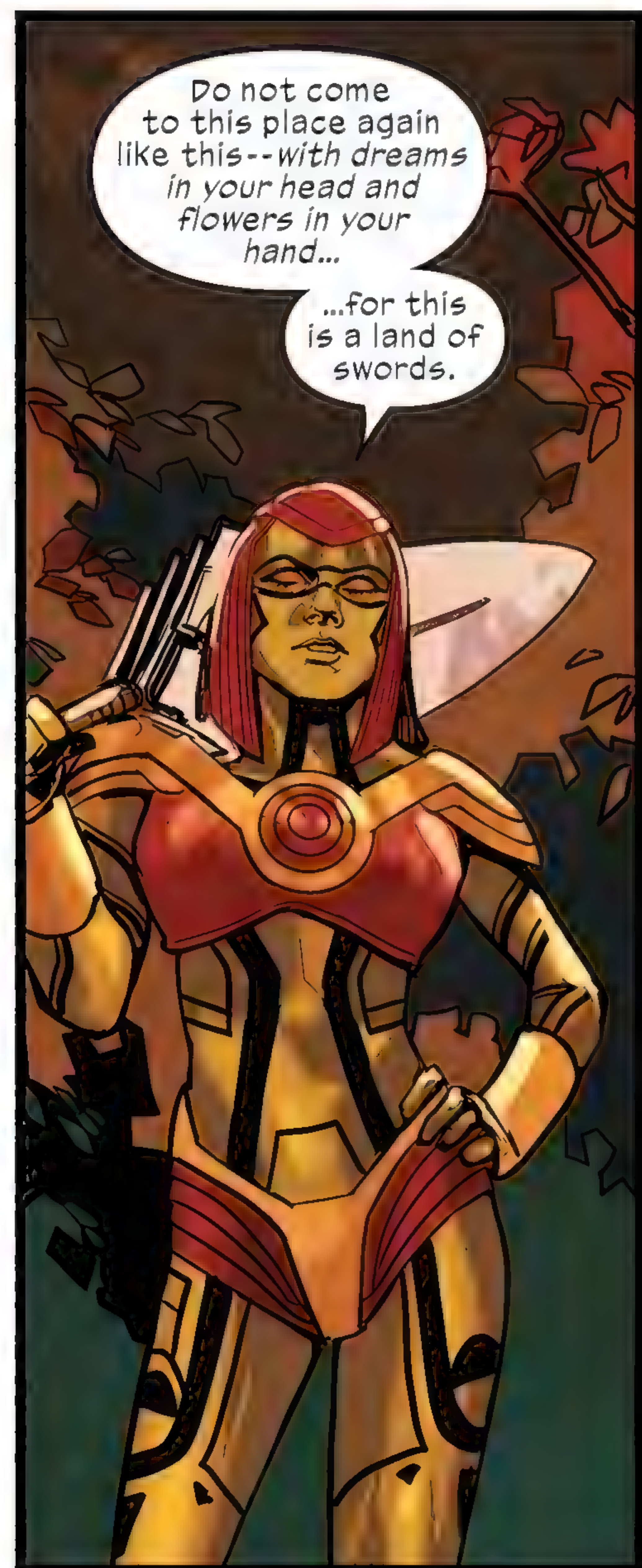
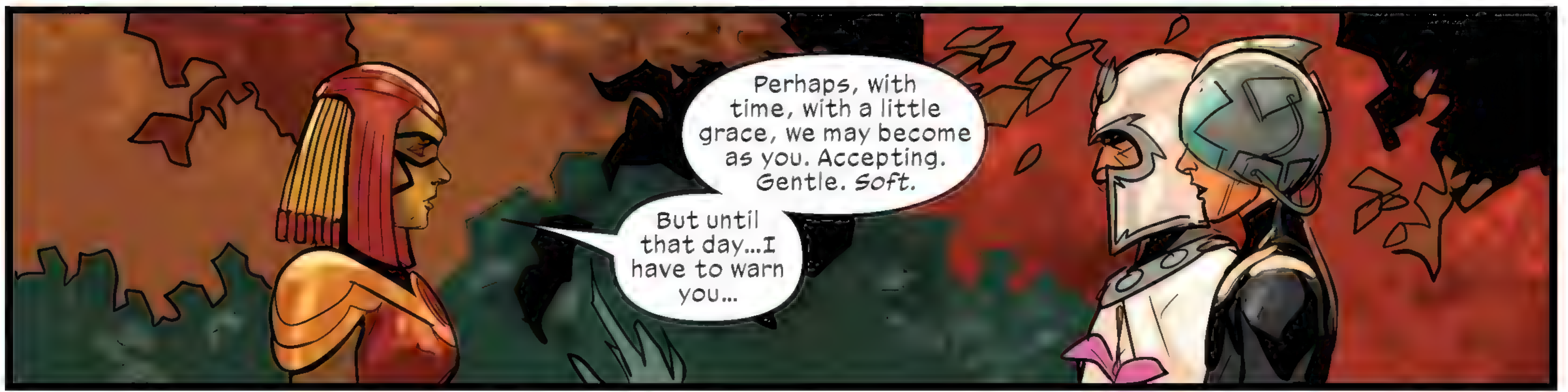
It's called the Quiet Council. It's a noble body full of wise leaders who will rule for thousands of years and beyond.



I see through you, mutant. All the way to the truth.

You are *children* running a *child government*.





THE GREAT RING OF ARAKKO

DAWN

[01_03].....[Daw_00]
[04_06].....[Dus_00]

[01]	.....	[_____ISCA THE UNBEATEN]
[02]	.....	[_____IDYLL]
[03]	.....	[_____TARN THE UNCARING]

DUSK

[04]	.....	[____ORA SERRATA THE WITNESS]
[05]	.....	[_____STULGID]
[06]	.....	[_____LODUS LOGOS]

DAY

[07]	.....	[_____LACTUCA]
[08]	.....	[_____██████████]
[09]	.....	[_____SOBUNAR]

ARAKKO

[10]	.....	[_____ARAKKO]
[11]	.....	[_____REDROOT (OTHERWORLD)]

[07_09]... ..[Day_00]
[Arakko]... ..[Rdroot]

NIGHT

[12]	.....	[_____██████████]
[13]	.....	[_____██████████]
[14]	.....	[_____██████████]

[10_12].....[Ngt_00]

POWER

There is only one measure of worth on Arakko -- power. To that end, the Great Ring of Arakko is made up of not just the most intelligent and cunning of mutants, but also the most powerful.

No mutant has ever sat on the Great Ring who was not an Omega-level mutant. Not once. It has never happened -- it never will.

[NOTE: While the Great Ring only has nine recognized seats, there has always been rumor of three more seats apart from the Ring itself. These ‘Night’ seats, both in makeup and purpose, remain a mystery.]

[00.Strength.....0]
[00.....0]

[11]

[10]

[01]

[02]

[03]

[07]

[04]

[08]

[05]

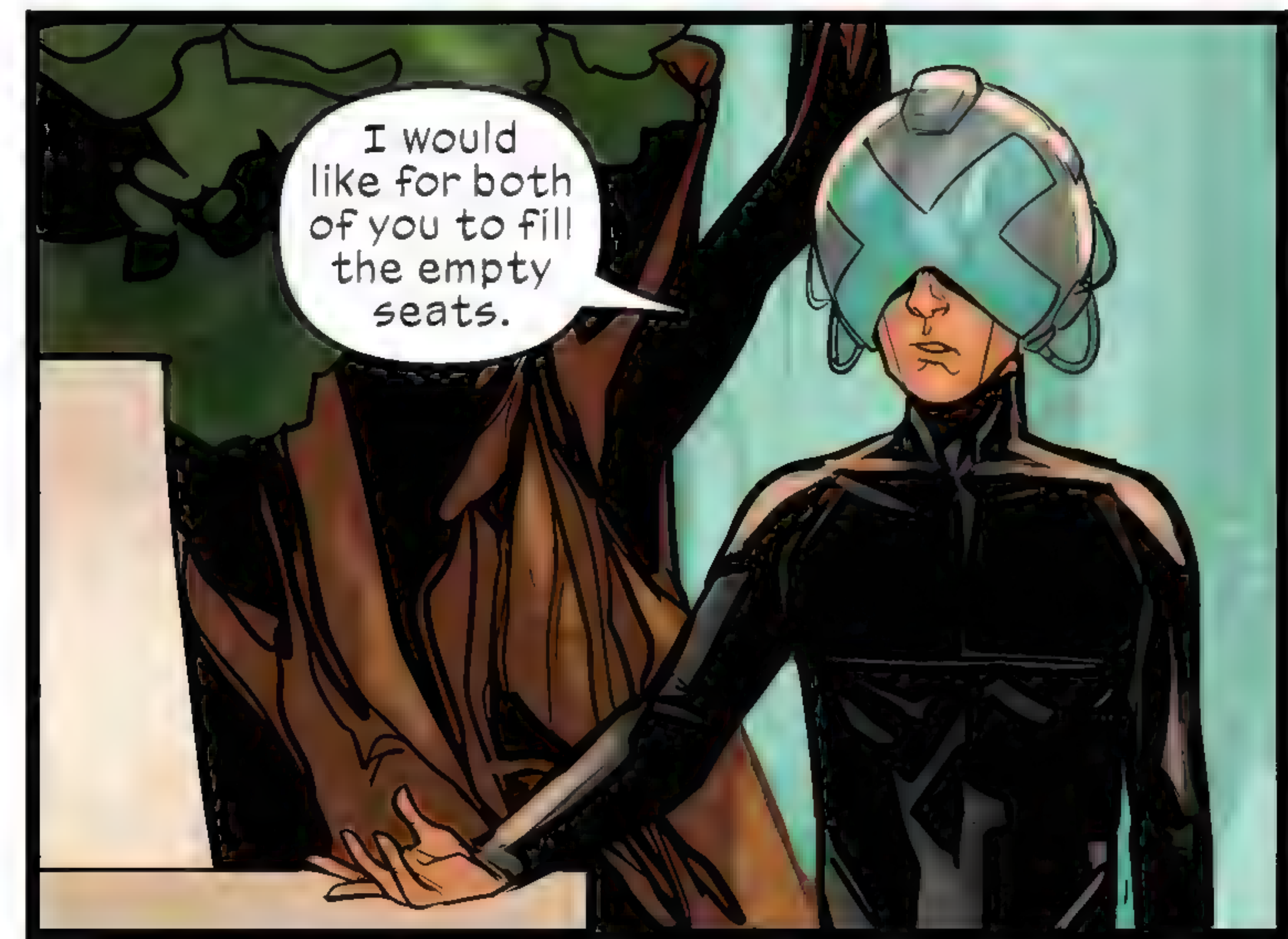
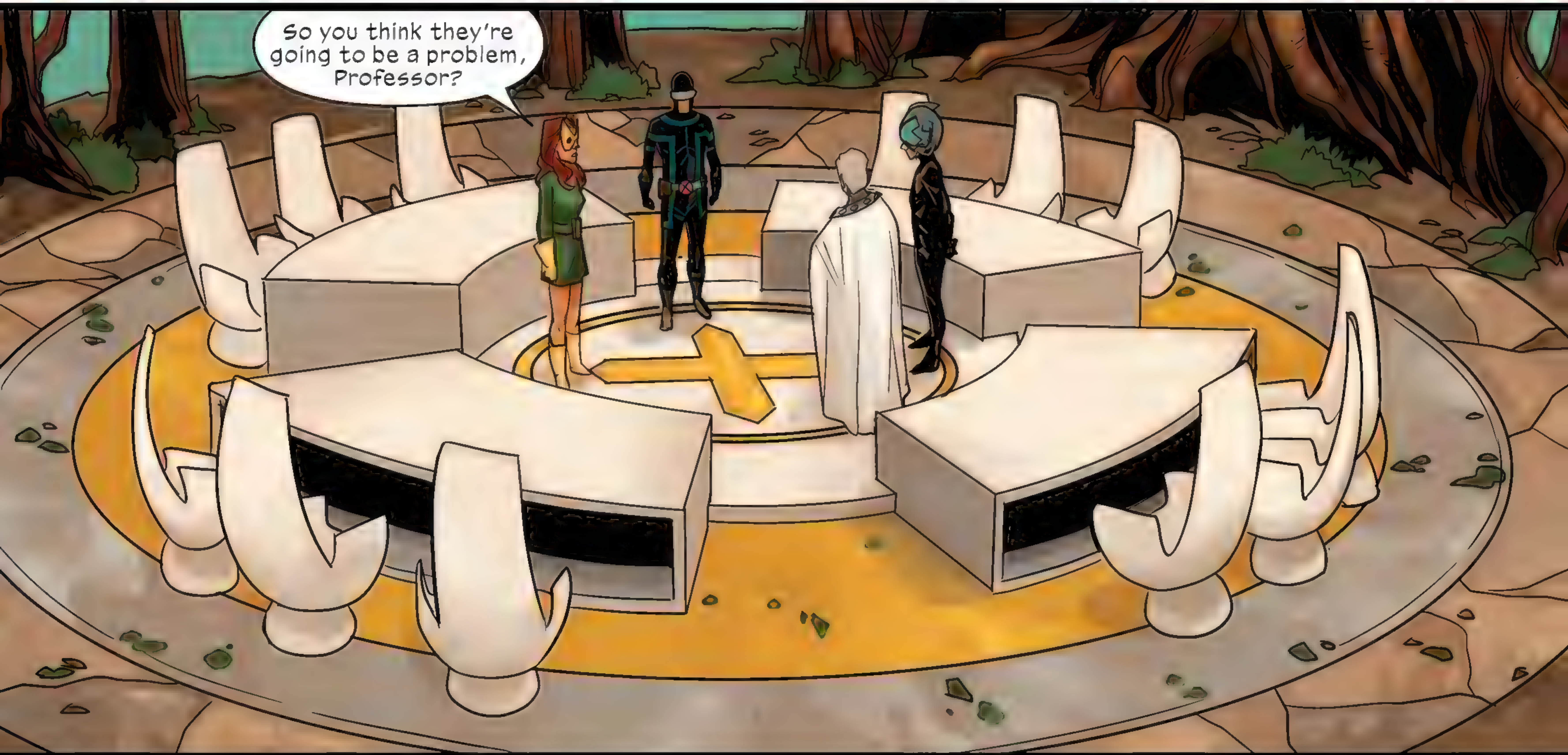
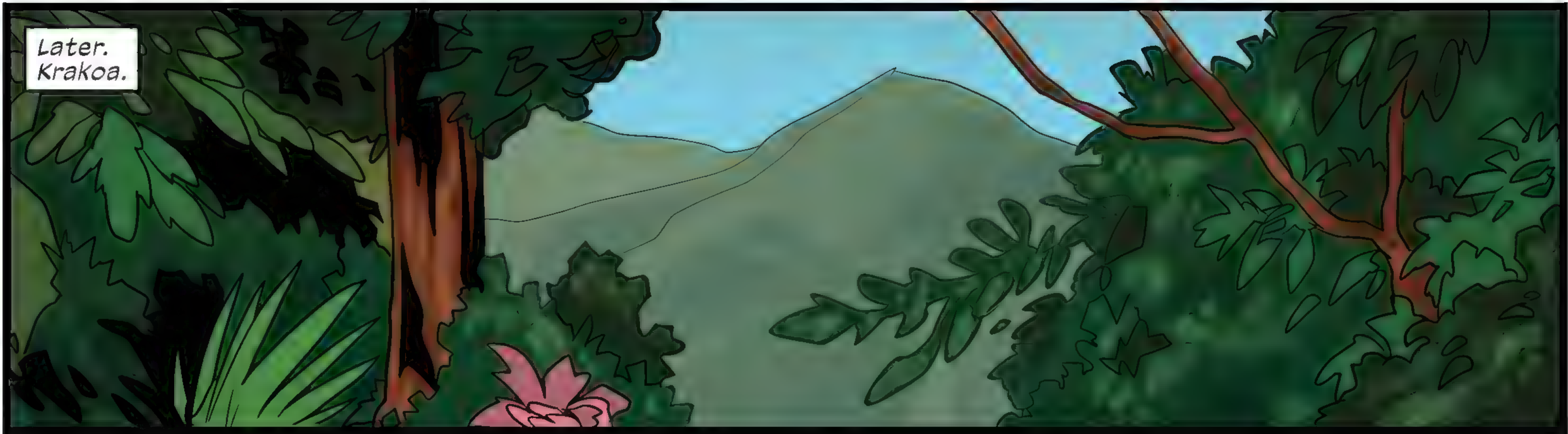
[09]

[06]

[12]

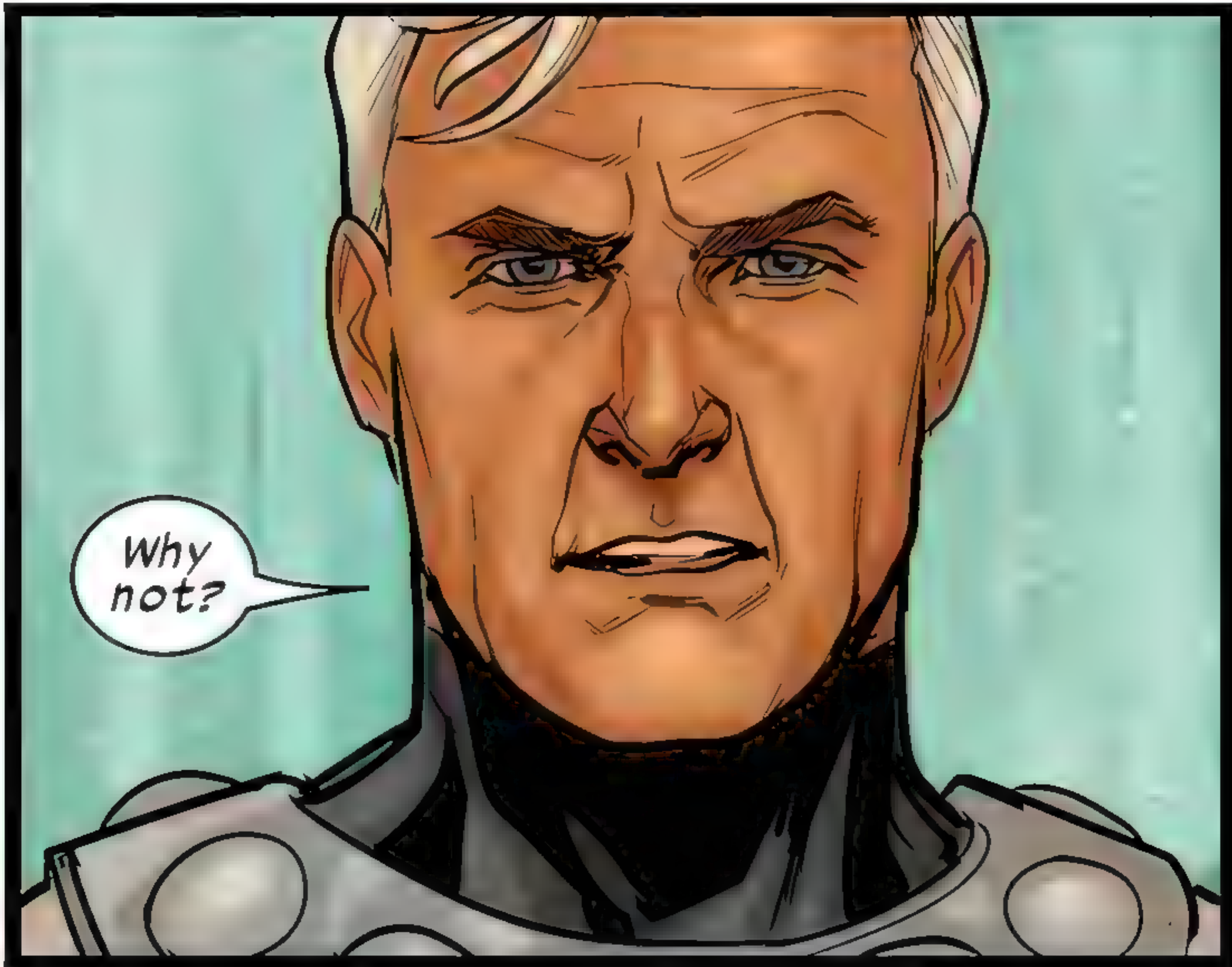
[13]

[14]

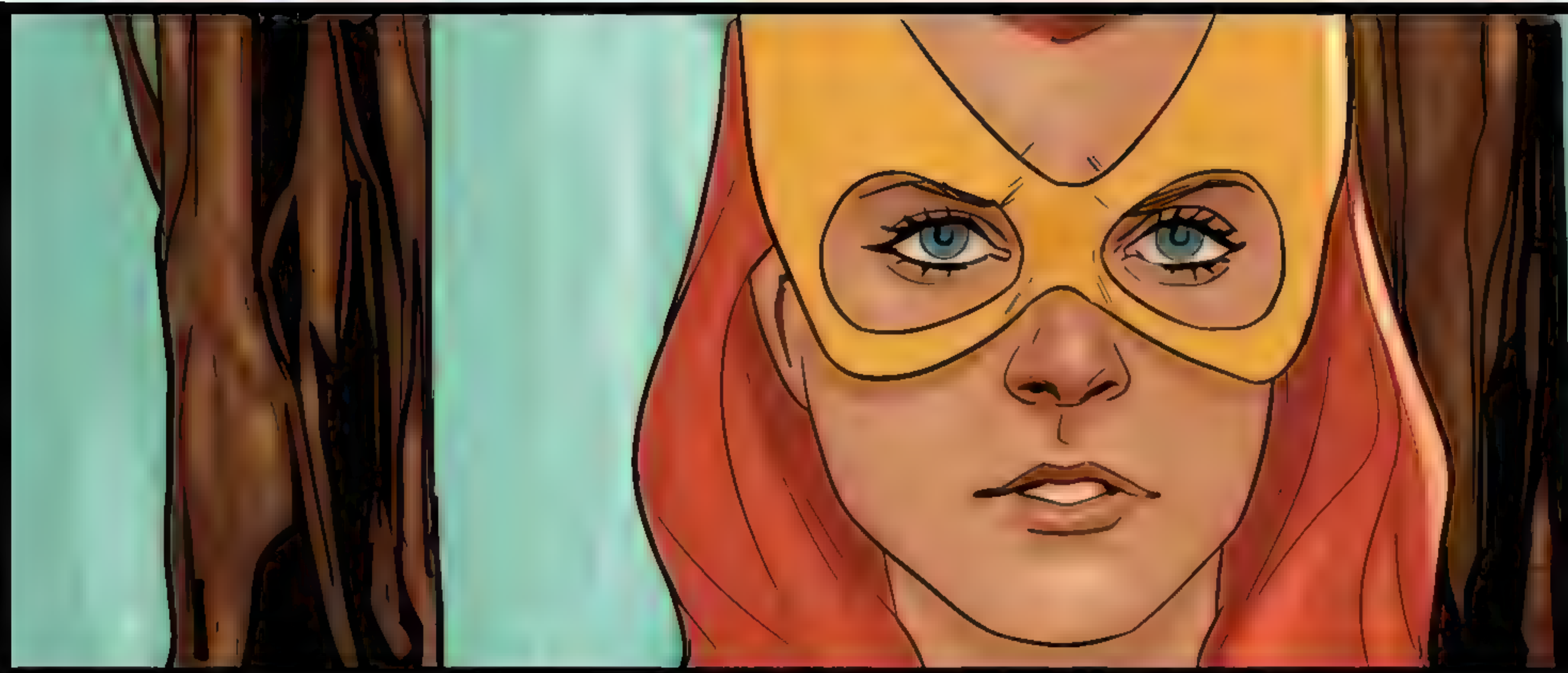




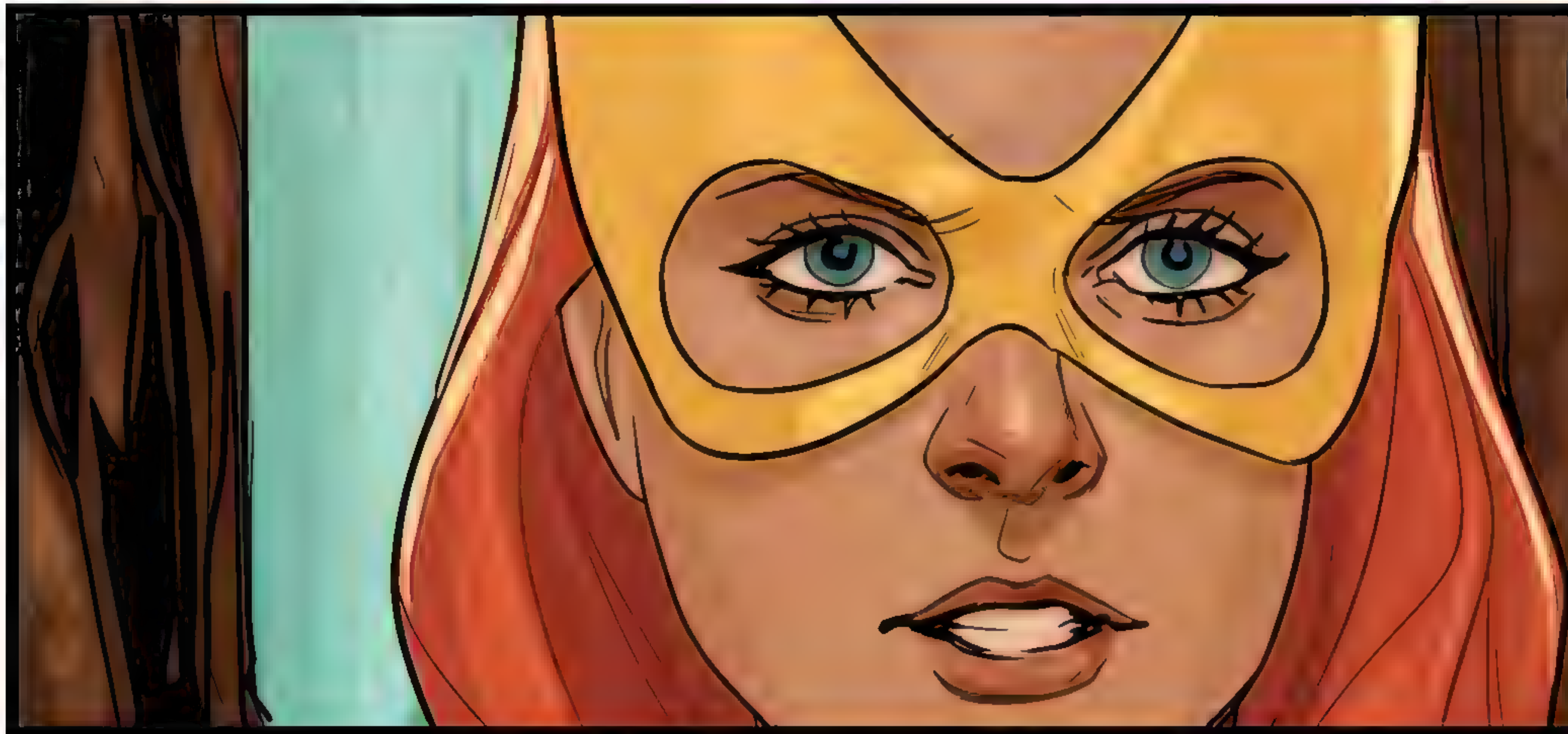
...
No. Thank you, sir.
But I can't either.



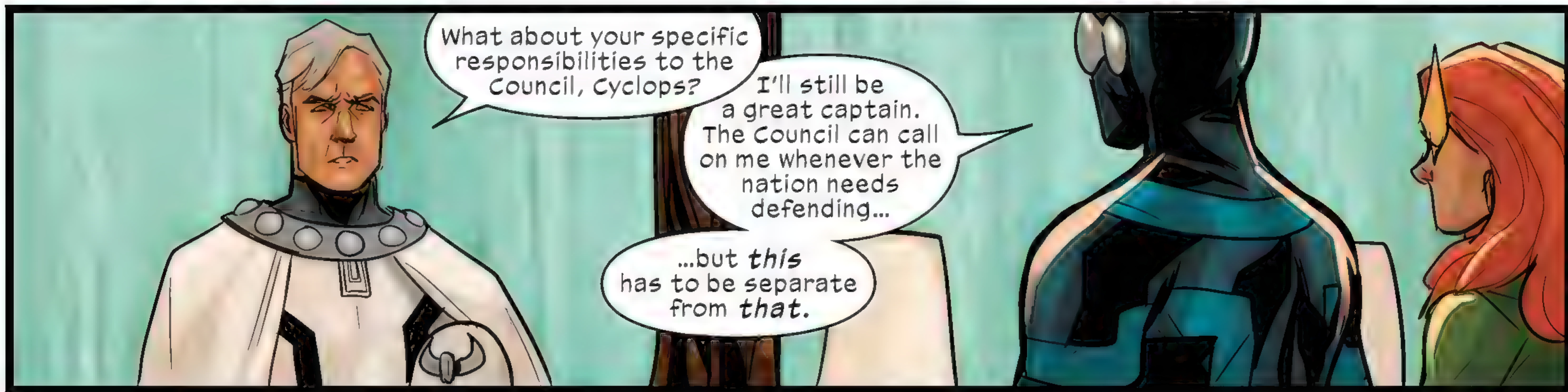
Why not?



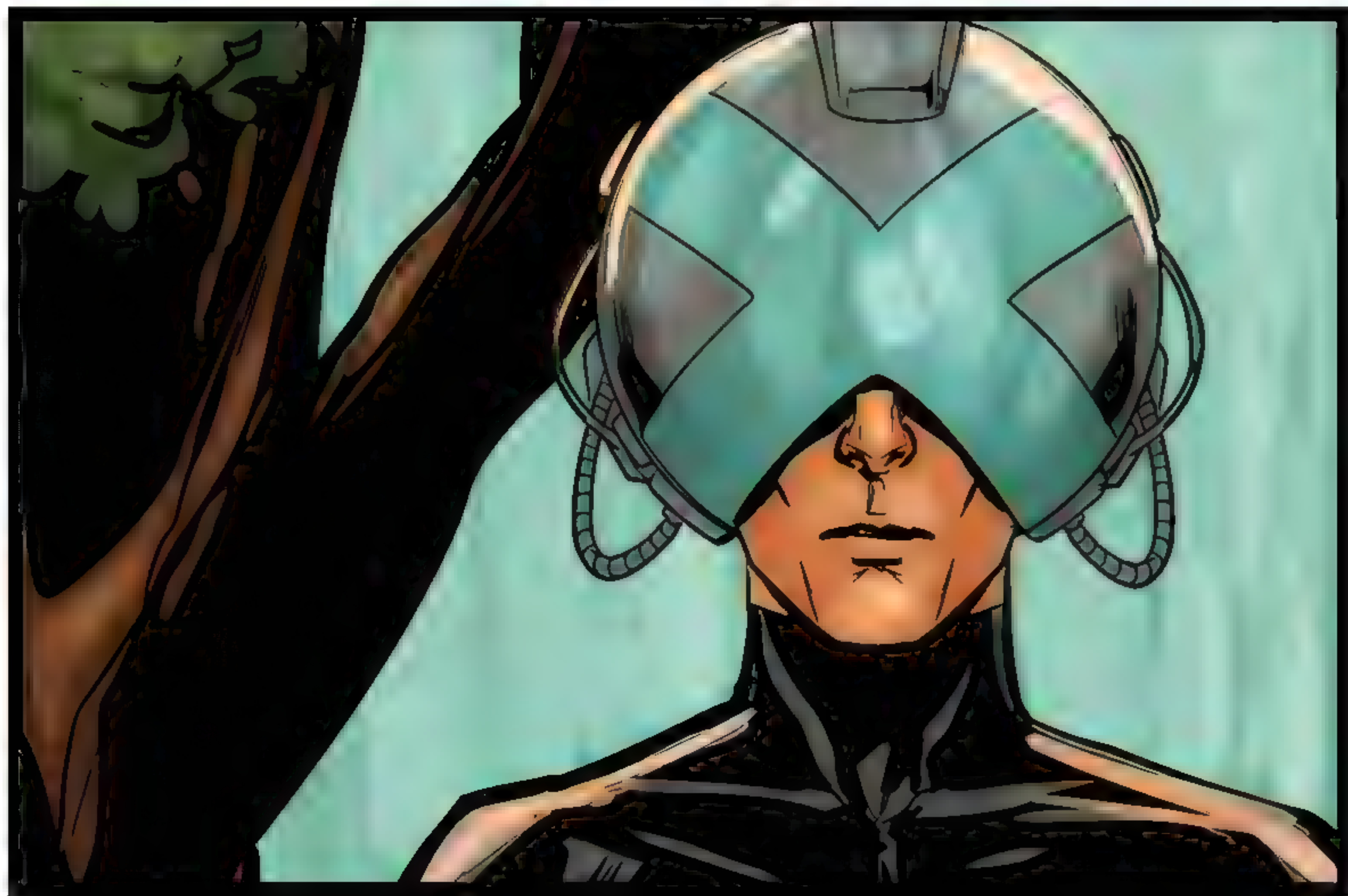
Because we feel like we have something more important to do now.
The X-Men.
If there's one thing that Scott and I have learned through the beginning of our great Krakoa experiment, it's *this*...



The people of our nation need to feel like someone is acting on their behalf. Not deciding what's best for them--not deciding what *is* and *is not* in their best interest--but someone who fights for them.
And that's us.



What about your specific responsibilities to the Council, Cyclops?
I'll still be a great captain. The Council can call on me whenever the nation needs defending...
...but *this* has to be separate from *that*.



I can tell...there's no talking either of you out of this. *Is there?*



ELECTION



OF THE X-MEN

PARTY AFFILIATIONS

Akados Habitat	Eligible
House of M	Eligible
Hellfire	Eligible
Bar Sinister	Eligible
Quiet Council	Not eligible
Wild Hunt	Eligible
Arakkii Pillar	Eligible

FOR THE PEOPLE

The X-Men are the heroes of Krakoa. For the people, made up of the mutants of our great nation.

In the coming days, we will announce the dates of our annual X-Men election and will be accepting nominations for representatives. This will be followed by a formal vote and then an unveiling of your team at the first Hellfire Gala.



Empty Nest

19

"The supercluster of galaxies that make up our sector of this universal quadrant are in *turmoil*."

"For thousands--tens of thousands--of years, the one thing that outlasted wars, invasions, annihilation events and celestial disruptions was what held most of these ancient societies together."

"Commerce.
Trade. Wealth."

"Warlike or savage, ancient or cultured, the great civilizations of this supercluster always maintained a formal or informal network of *interconnectedness*."

"Either by banking guilds, a unified credit system or black markets, the great economic balance that propped up all society remained intact."

"Until
now."

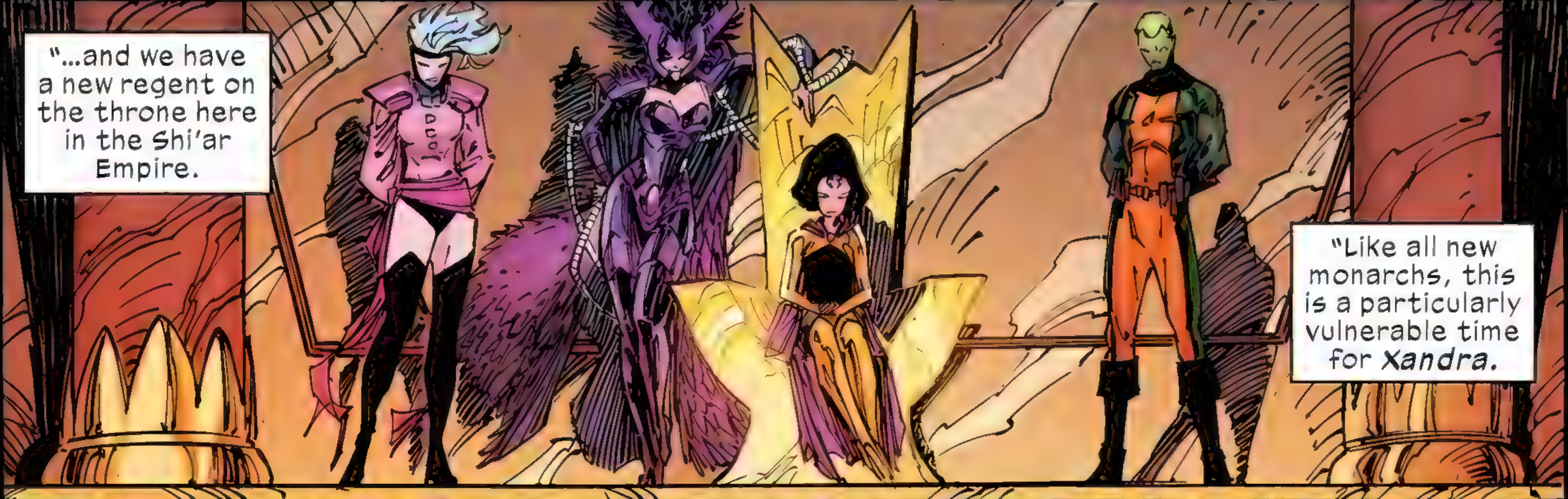




"Whether Shi'ar or Brood, Kree or Skrull, Wraith or Kymellian...

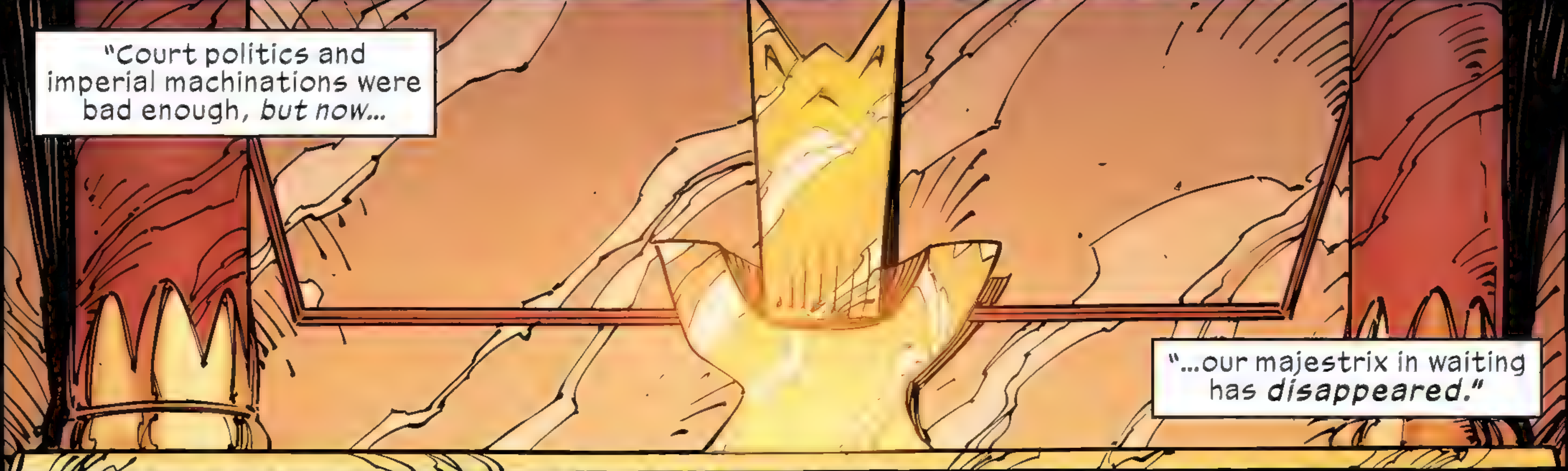
"...along with all galactic currency, worlds are collapsing...and are only kept in line by the might of our Praetor.

"These are *not* yet the *black days* of *end-times*, but the *sun is setting*...



"...and we have a new regent on the throne here in the Shi'ar Empire.

"Like all new monarchs, this is a particularly vulnerable time for *Xandra*.



"Court politics and imperial machinations were bad enough, *but now*...

"...our majestrix in waiting has *disappeared*."



I suspect foul play. Court betrayal or an alien assassination attempt.

The problem is this: *I cannot let word of this spread.*



So I need someone to find her--*discreetly*--while I maintain control on Chandilar.

My paramour promised that you not only could do this favor for the empire, but that I could also trust your discretion.

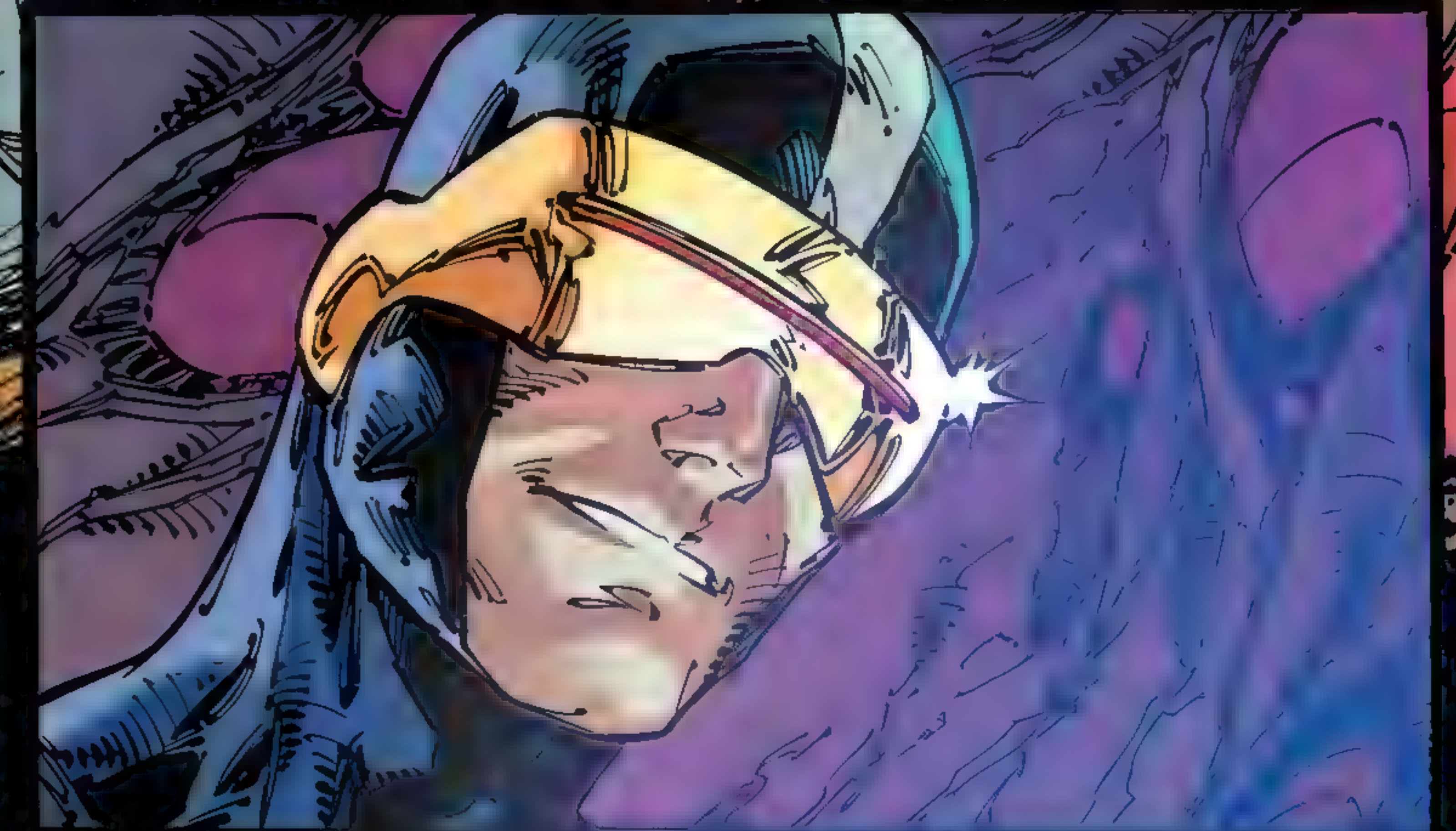


Was he correct?

Well, we do have a certain quality, and, frankly, we're in a *saving-the-day* kind of mood.



How soon can you get here?



One hour later.

Chandilar.
Throneworld of the
Shi'ar Empire.

Also, home to some
New Mutants.

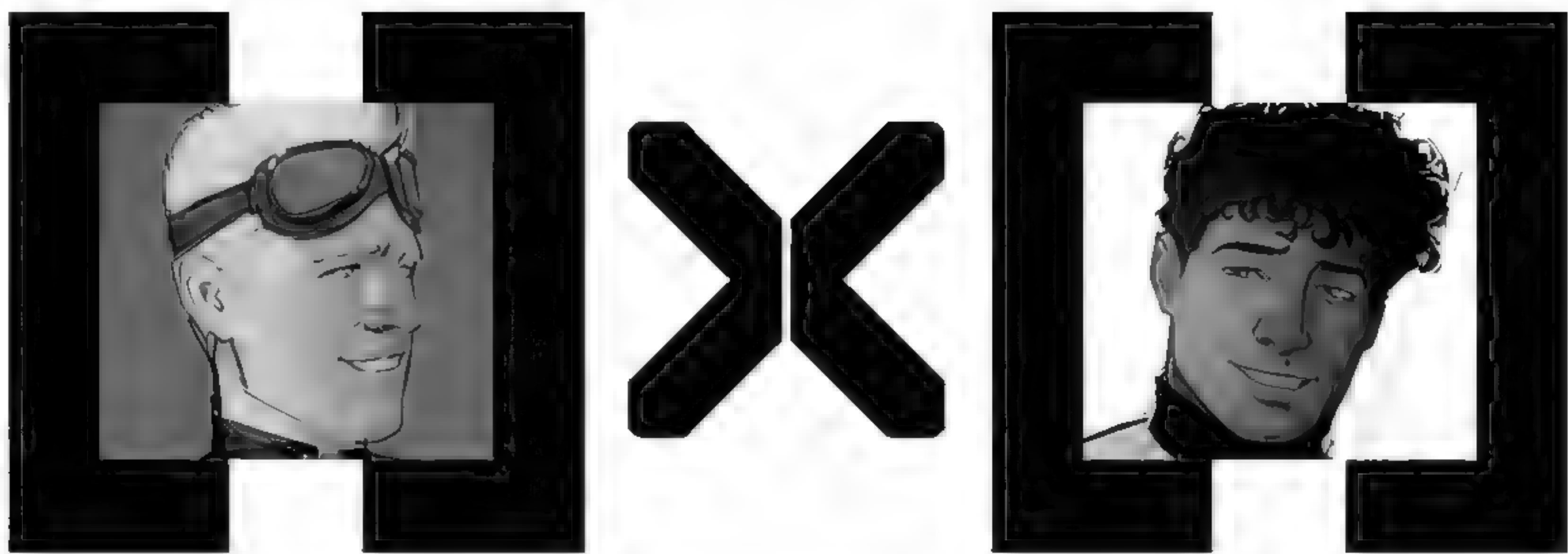
Hey,
Izzy. We're
here.

Put
us to
work.

Wow.
That was
fast.

Let me
tell the boys
we're headed to
the palace, and
we'll get
going.

[00.Bobby.....X]
[00.Sam.....X]



[.....] [BOBBY + SAM PRESENT: HOME ALONE TWO]

[Shi'ar].....[000]
[.....].....[000]

SUNSPOT: Hey, where did everyone go?

CANNONBALL: They took off for the palace.

SUNSPOT: What? Without us? What the heck, man?

CANNONBALL: They were in a hurry. And you, my best friend in the whole universe, were busy taking a bath. Who does that anyway? A bath, in the middle of day.

SUNSPOT: First off, I will not apologize for my hygiene, Sam. Just because one of us treats is body like a trash can doesn't mean we both should. And second, my lady makes me do it because she has a very sensitive nose and doesn't like, and I quote, Earth smells. Plus, they're relaxing and I just really like them.

CANNONBALL: Well, you do smell nice.

SUNSPOT: Thank you. This is what a super hero should smell like. And speaking of super heroes, why did those idiots leave behind the two greatest super heroes of all time, as, apparently, super hero things needed doing?

CANNONBALL: Oh, I'm babysitting the kid. After all, I'm not just a super hero, Bobby, I'm a super hero dad.

SUNSPOT: Listen, Sam, we've talked about this before. Our partnership transcends the societal norms of what is and is not expected of normal dudes. Did I complain when you got married? No I did not. Did I complain when you had the kid? Of course not. I'm the godfather to that kick ass little mutant. Couldn't be happier. All I asked, and you agreed it's not asking too much, was that we maintain the incredible level of communication we've developed over the years. So when I talk, you know what I'm really saying. And when you talk, I promise to always listen. Always.

CANNONBALL: Look, Bobby, you know that --

SUNSPOT: Hold that thought, Sam. I'm getting a call on my spacephone. It's my money dudes, so I need to take this.

[Krakoa].....[000]
[.....].....[000]

The Imperial Palace.

"So what do we know?"

Deathbird is keeping things locked down tight, but from what I understand, Xandra disappeared sometime last night.

She was in the royal wing-- the guards who were on duty were found dead-- but security footage doesn't show that anyone entered or exited the room.

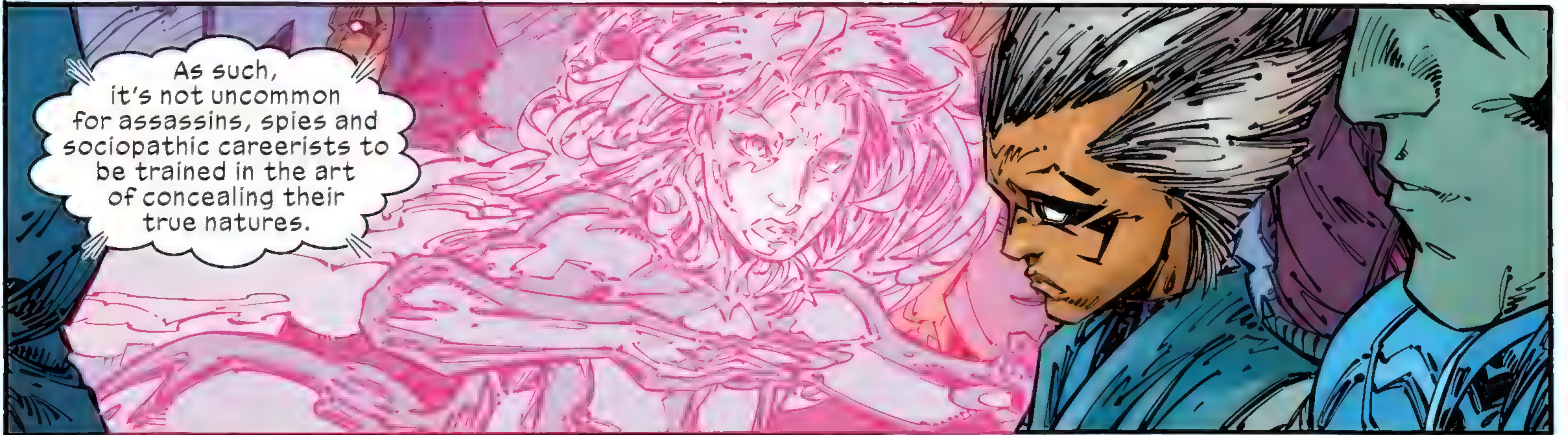
That could either mean an inside job or that whoever this was has the technical prowess to bypass the best security the empire has to offer.

What about the staff?

Normally? Vetted. Seriously vetted.

But I dunno... desperate times lead to desperate people doing things they normally wouldn't...





So, in situations like these, I've often found it effective to not look for what someone is thinking...

...but to focus in on an absence of certain thoughts entirely. See the mask for what it is.

That one.





Death to Xandra!

Death to all tyrants!

BOOM!!!



Was that me or you?

Hard to tell.



Deathbird. Look. The assassin's disguise is fading.

It's a *Stygian*. Their innate resistance to telepathy explains how she got past us. As for why, well...



Yes.

It's all becoming clear to me.

The catacombs
of Chandilar.

Hoor'Osk. Bettlyze Prime. Gal-Durann.
All of these heavy-gravity worlds,
the empire gave to us.

Mine them,
the Shi'ar said.
Make the empire rich,
and the empire will
provide for your
people.

Where are
the Shi'ar now,
I ask?

Where is
their money and
the gratitude it
buys?

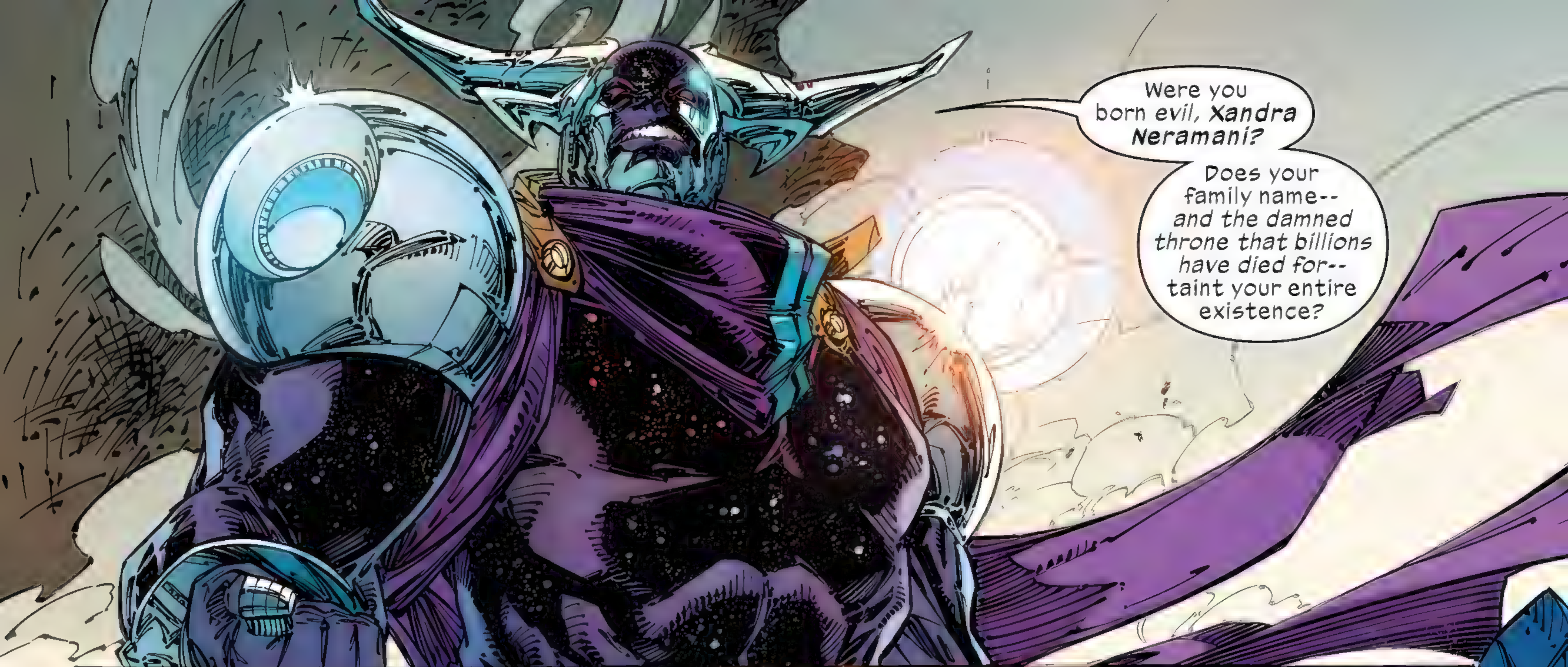
Gone
with the great
collapse.

I'm sorry,
they say...no one
could have seen
this coming.

We regret
that your people
starve...even more,
we regret that
there's nothing
we can do.

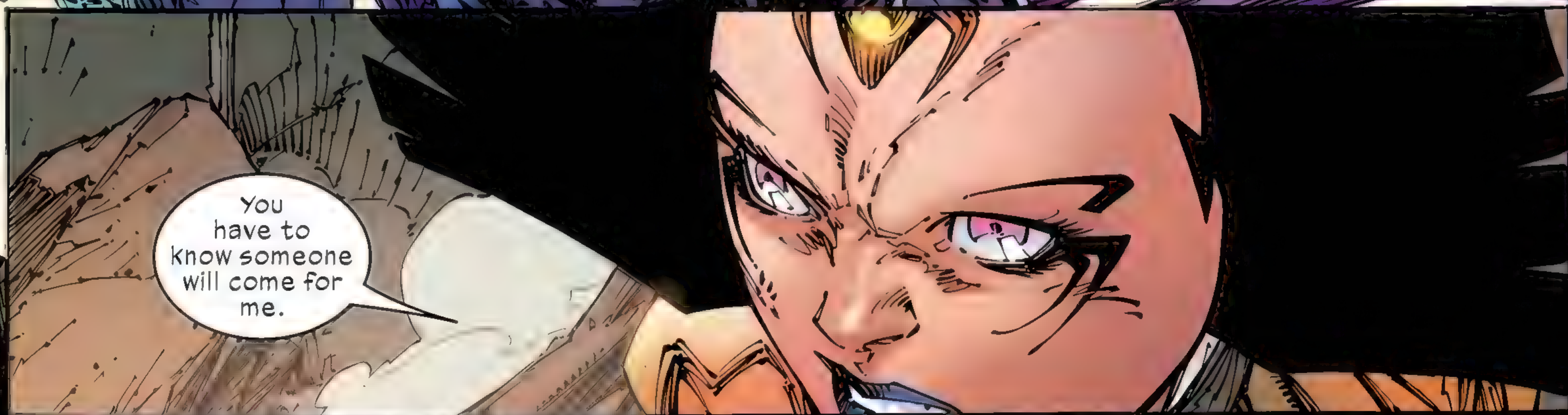
We should
be *grateful*. It's
not often that the
unseen hand of
subjugation is
revealed...

...and
revealed to
be that of an
entitled
child.



Were you
born evil, *Xandra
Neramani*?

Does your
family name--
and the damned
throne that billions
have died for--
taint your entire
existence?



You
have to
know someone
will come for
me.



Do you see this weapon
I hold, child?

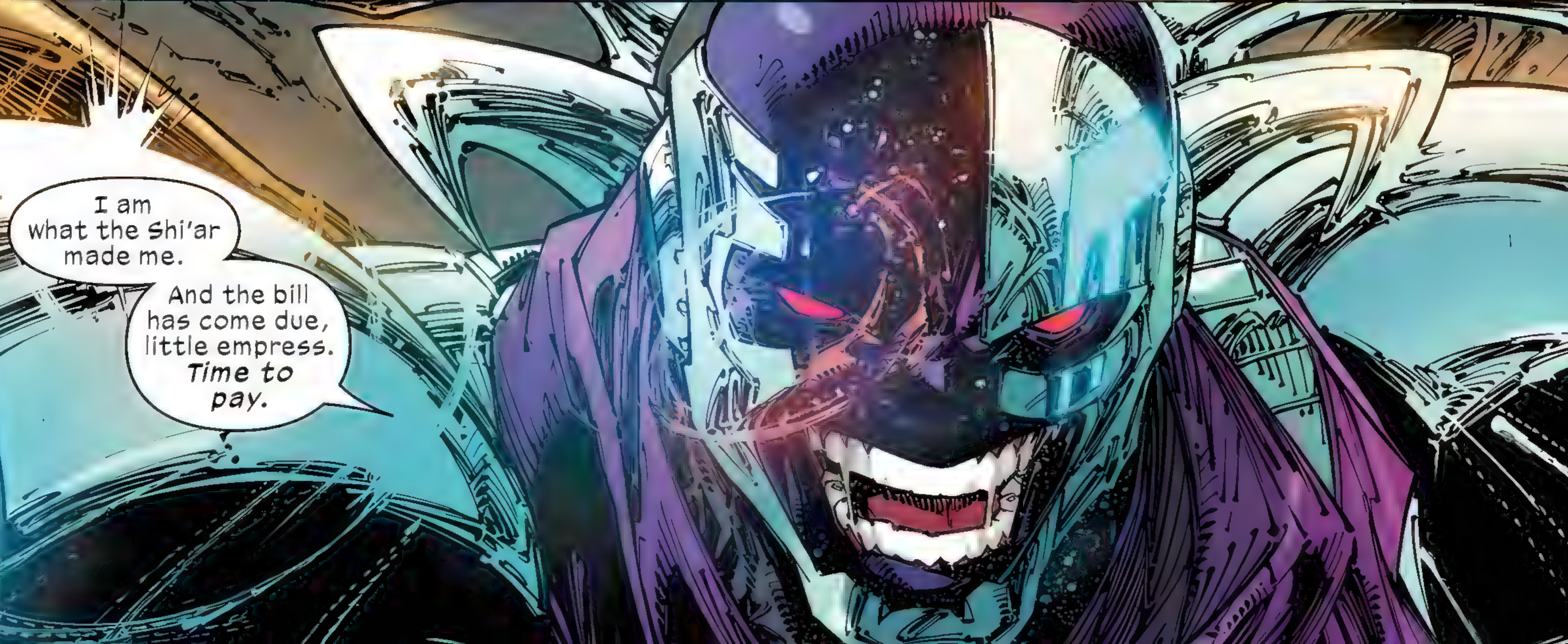
It is the
great Maul of Stygia,
and with it, I executed every
member of our puppet
Shi'ar government.

My own brother--
my own blood--tasted
this metal. For I am *justice*
for the people. *I am Urr.*



You're a
monster.

I am
what the
universe
made
me.



I am
what the Shi'ar
made me.

And the bill
has come due,
little empress.
*Time to
pay.*



The assassin's mind was like a fog... but it was clear that a deep-seeded anti-imperial sentiment was there.

This financial collapse must have made it worse, but I'm sure it wasn't that hard to position their people into place for something like this.

After all, they clean up after the Shi'ar. They wash their clothes. They make their food.

This...has probably been a long time coming.



How many of them are there?

No idea. Again, it was like a soup in there.



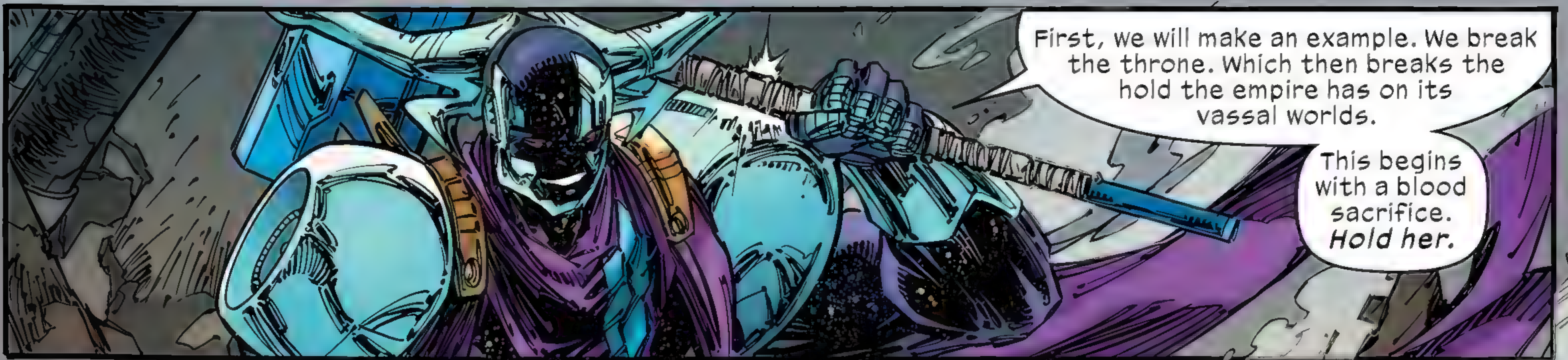
All right. Well, I've heard enough.



What are you doing?

Making sure we don't get the empress killed.

BE-DOOP



First, we will make an example. We break the throne. Which then breaks the hold the empire has on its vassal worlds.

This begins with a blood sacrifice. Hold her.



Any last words, tyrant?

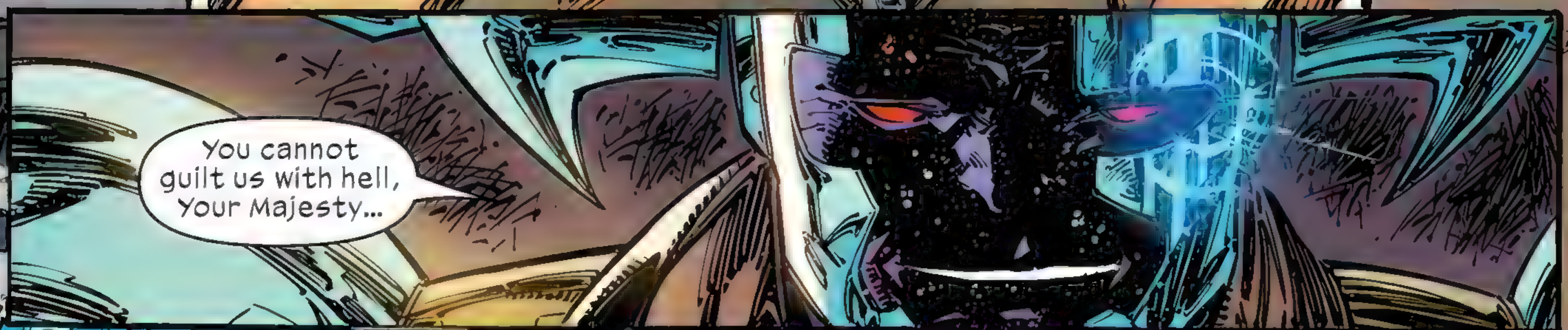


I have ruled for less than the blink of an eye, and that short term will almost certainly be defined by the collapse the universe is currently facing.

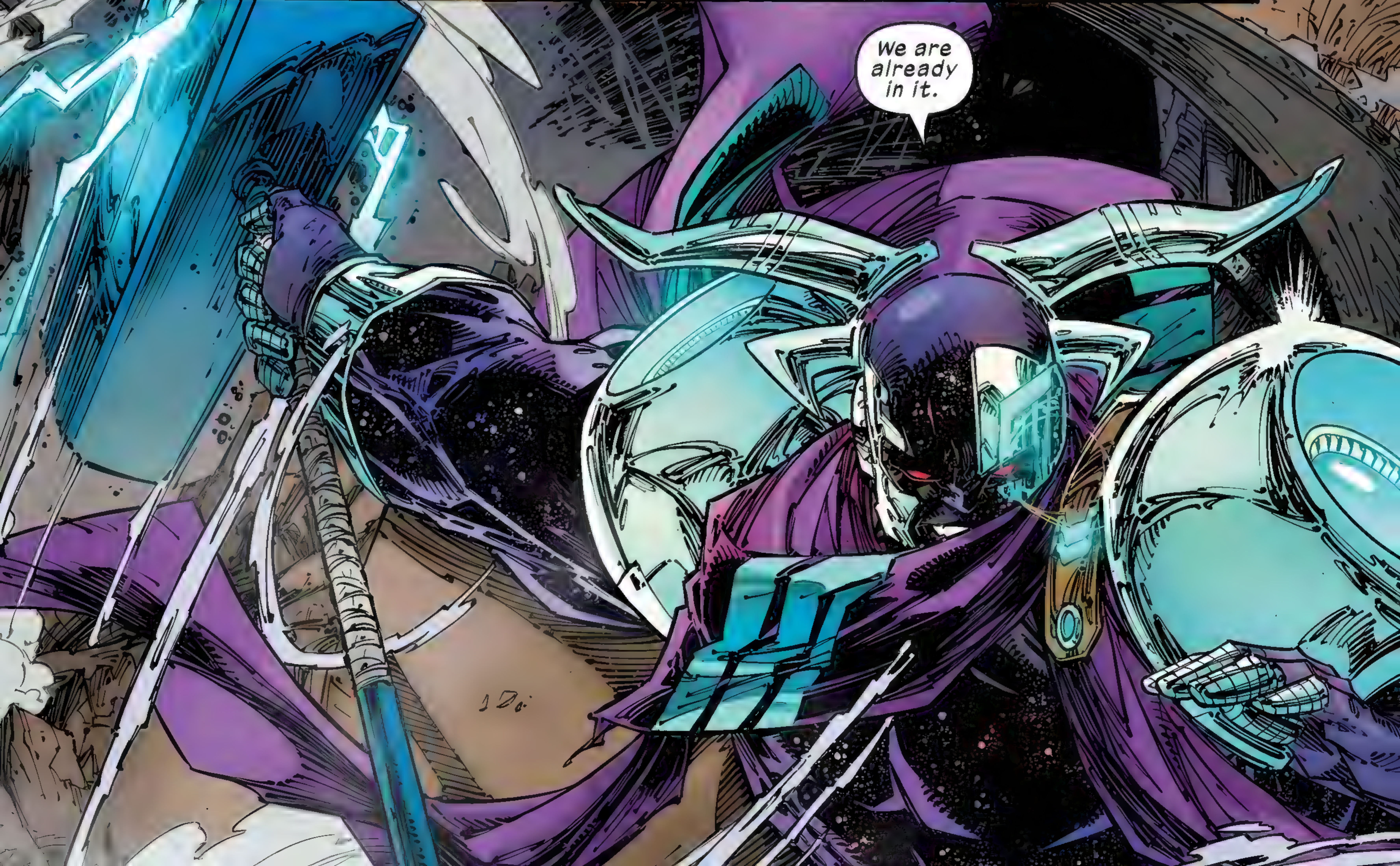
You have no idea what I would have done--and I believe I would have done well--but that doesn't matter to you.

You think you are righteous... **but this?** This just makes you a murderer.

So swing true, villain. We children care so very little for dying badly over sins we did not commit.



You cannot guilt us with hell, Your Majesty...



We are already in it.

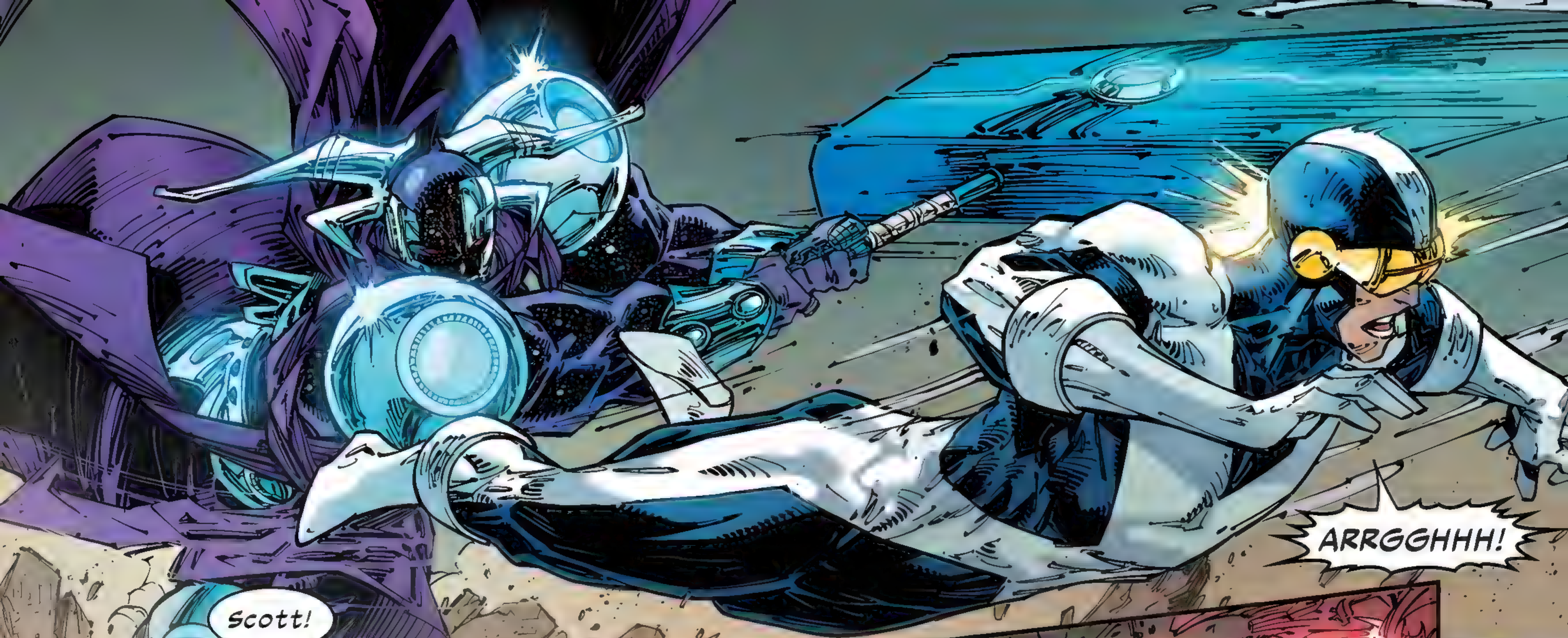


ARGHHH!

Protect the empress, Smasher...

We'll handle the rest.

Is that so?
Is that really what you believe?



ARRGGHHH!

Scott!

There're more of them than we thought. You need to--

Go ahead. I'll take care of this.



So few of you? And for a task well beyond bravery and valor.

We are a desperate people. We are willing to die here today.

Are you?



He's out cold, Ororo.

We need to leave. Now!



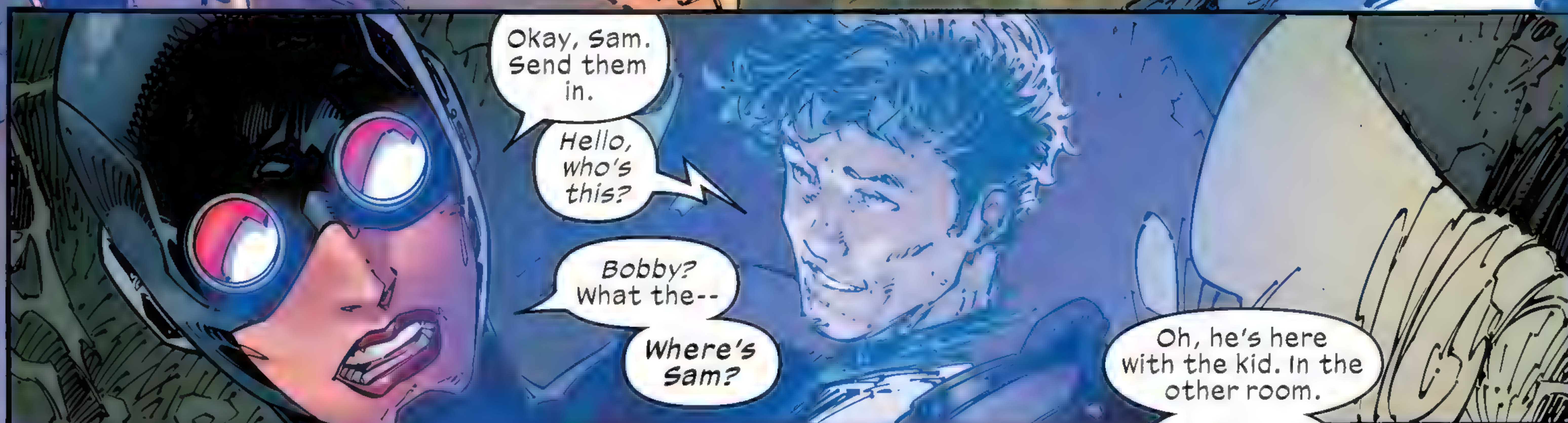


Superguardian,
join them if you need to...
I can make a run for it.
I'll send for help as soon
as I'm clear.

That won't
be necessary, Your
Majesty.

I came
prepared.

BE-
DOOP



Okay, Sam.
Send them
in.

Hello,
who's
this?

Bobby?
What the--

Where's
Sam?

Oh, he's here
with the kid. In the
other room.

Listen, can
this wait? I'm
on the other
line.



What?



You're not going to believe this, but
my money guys called and, woo boy,
there's a fire sale on.

Oh, hey,
Izzy. How goes
work?

Not now, Sam--
we're talking about
money. So anyway, I clawed
back some of that X-Corp cash,
we diversified--whatever the
hell that means--and now
we're buying everything,
baby.

Pennies
on the
dollar.







Look around you. This is how it always ends for tyrants.

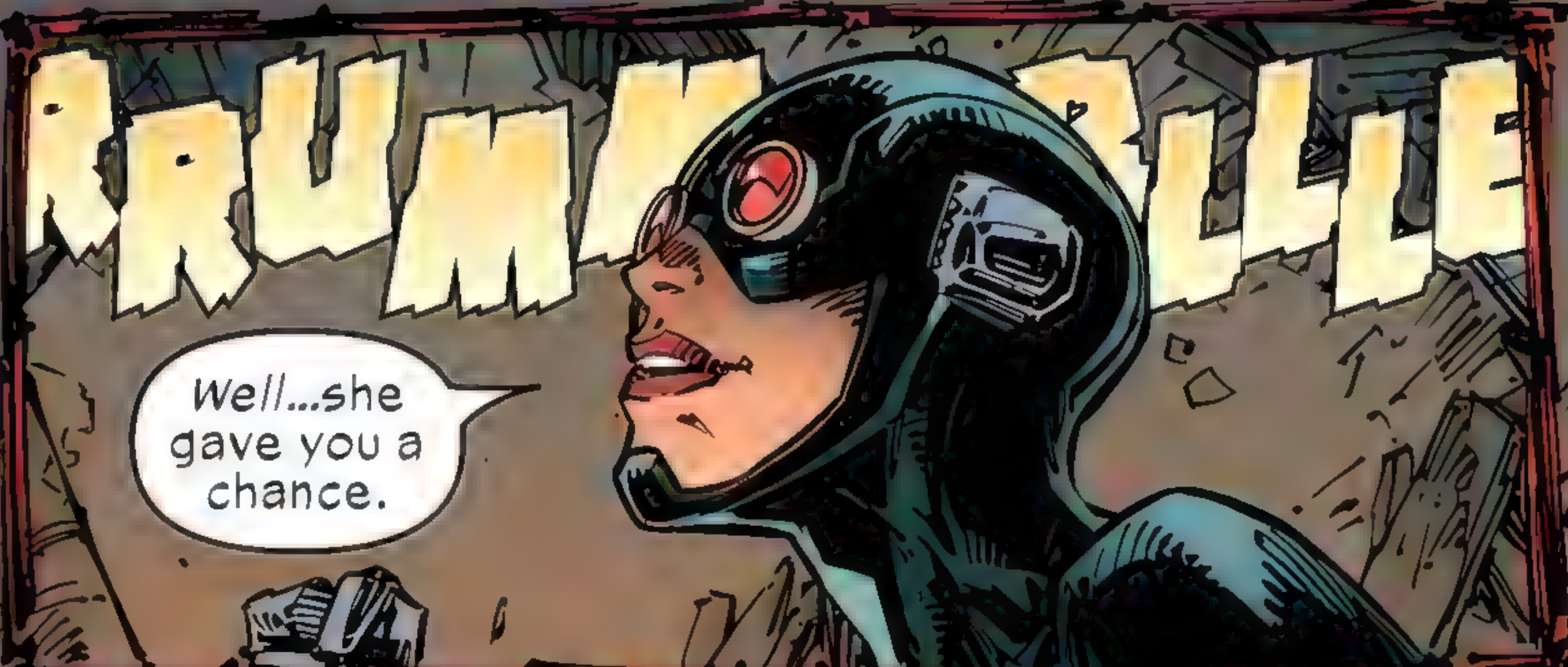
Always.

I don't know you...but I do know them and a little of the circumstances that pull at you both.

It begs for *grace*--this spot you find yourself in--so for you, I have *grace*...

But in small measure. *Stand down.*

Never.



Well...she gave you a chance.



ATTENTION



You want to replace me one day on the Imperial Guard? You want to be a superguardian?

Well, this is how you do it, guardians! Protect the throne! Protect the empire!



We may all die here today, Empress. But it's a fair price to pay to see the end to Neramani rule.

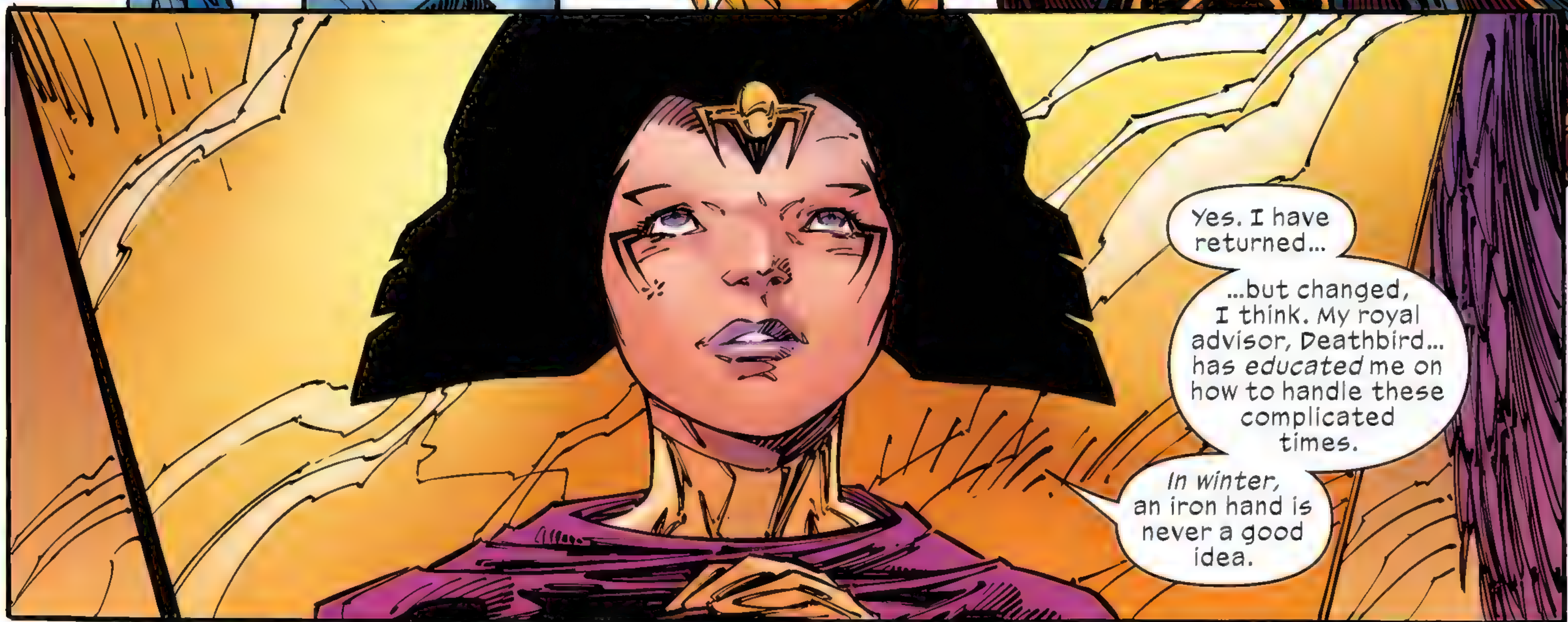
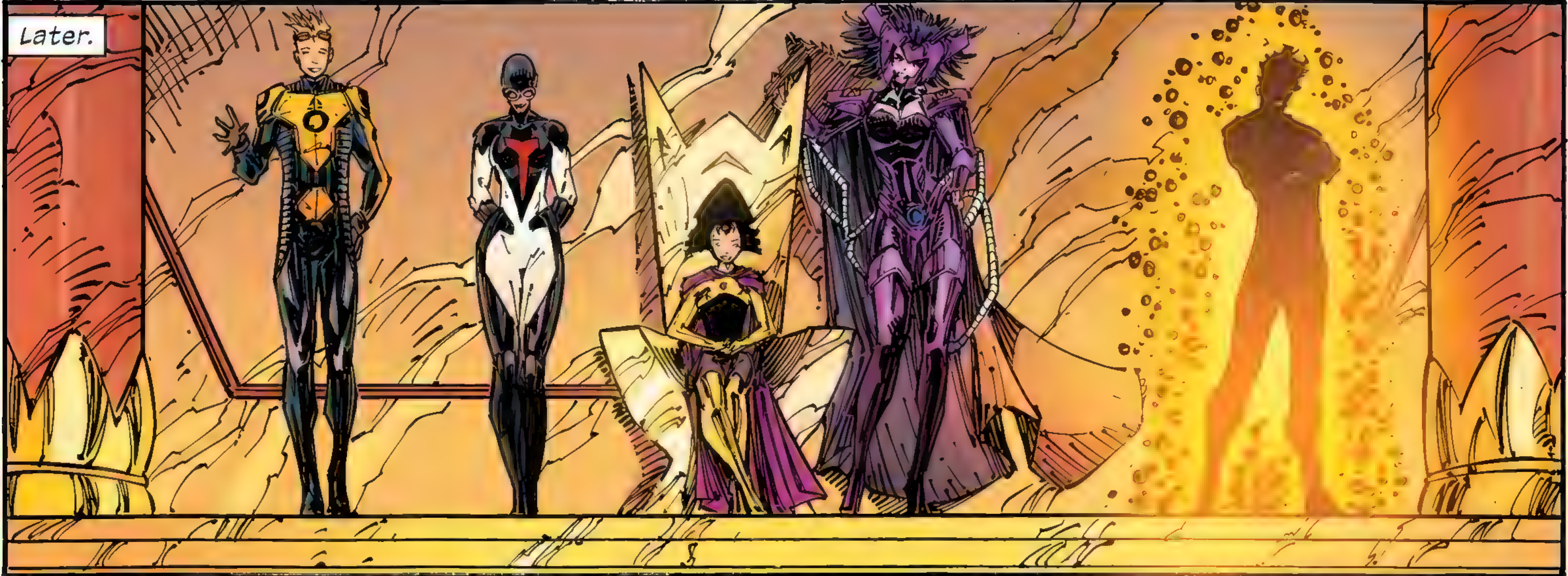
Wherever tomorrow finds you, priest, remember...

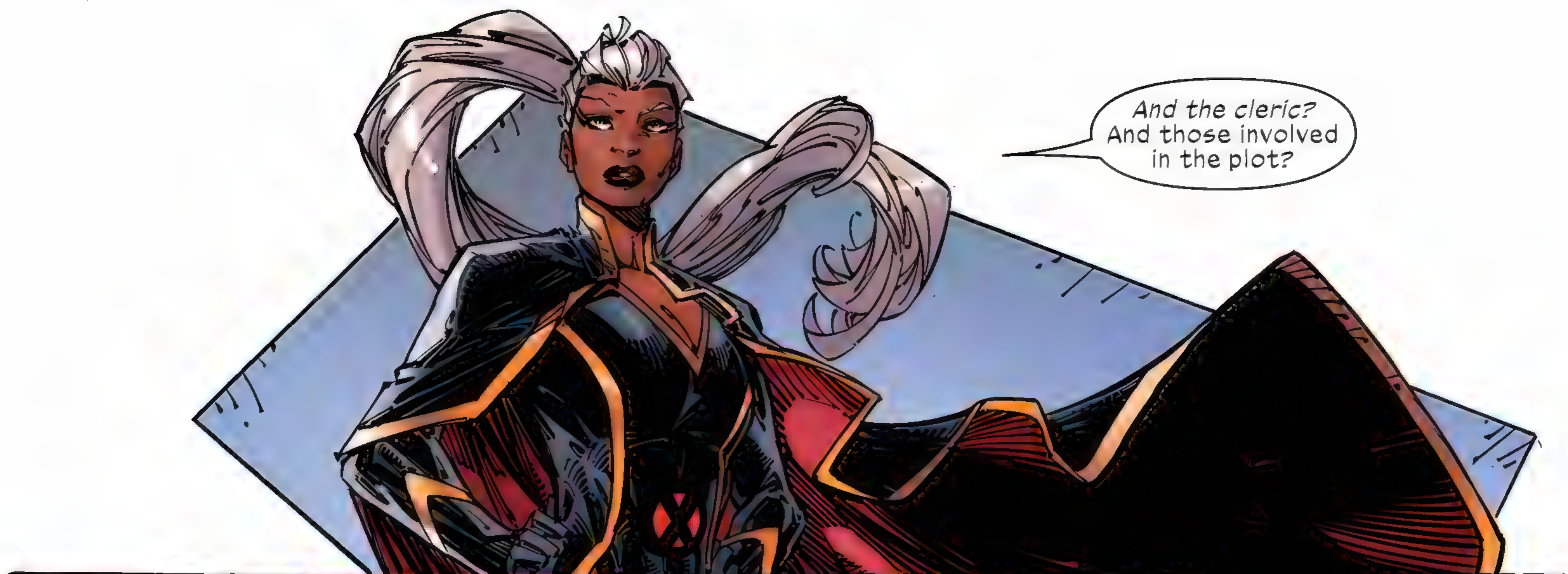
OOUFFFF!



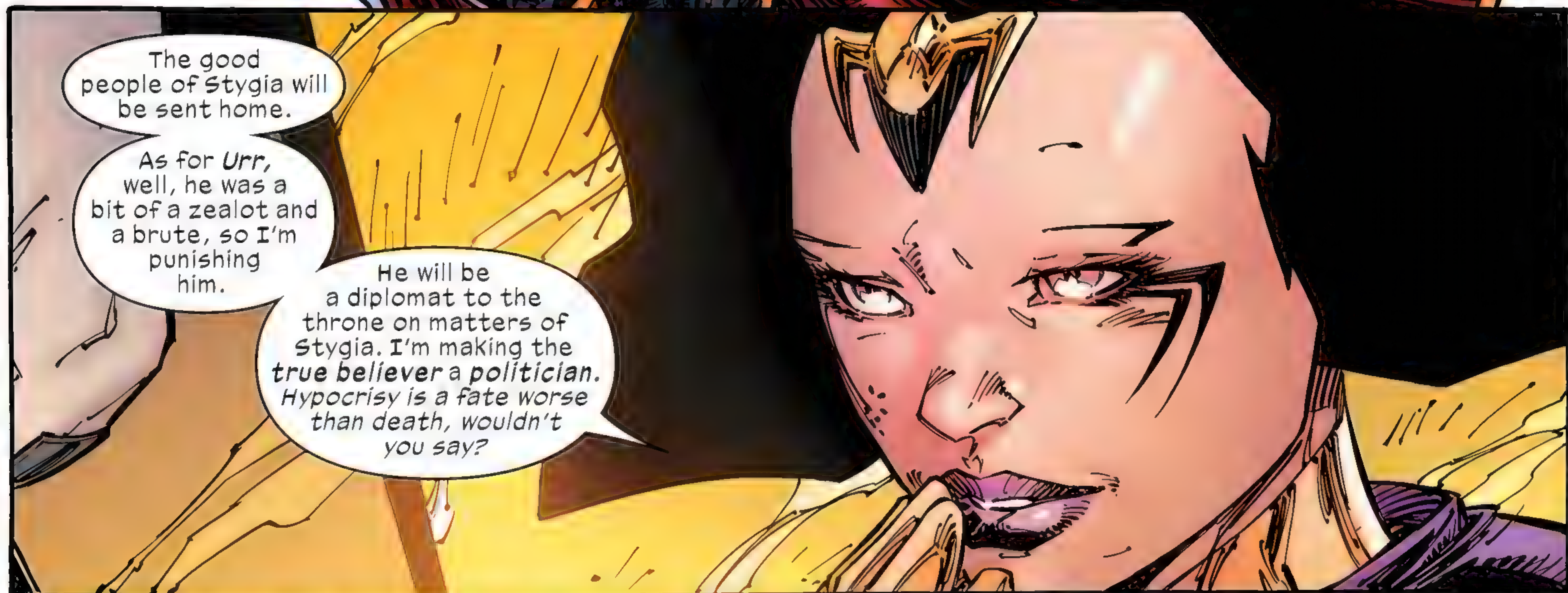
...you were warned.

KRAK-A-THOOOM





And the cleric?
And those involved
in the plot?



The good
people of Stygia will
be sent home.

As for Urr,
well, he was a
bit of a zealot and
a brute, so I'm
punishing
him.

He will be
a diplomat to the
throne on matters of
Stygia. I'm making the
true believer a politician.
Hypocrisy is a fate worse
than death, wouldn't
you say?



As for
you, Storm of
Krakoa, vanquisher
of a rebellion and
friend of the
throne...

To you...
I owe a
debt.



And in the
coming days,
should you need
anything
of me...

...feel free
to collect at
any time.



Inside the Vault

20

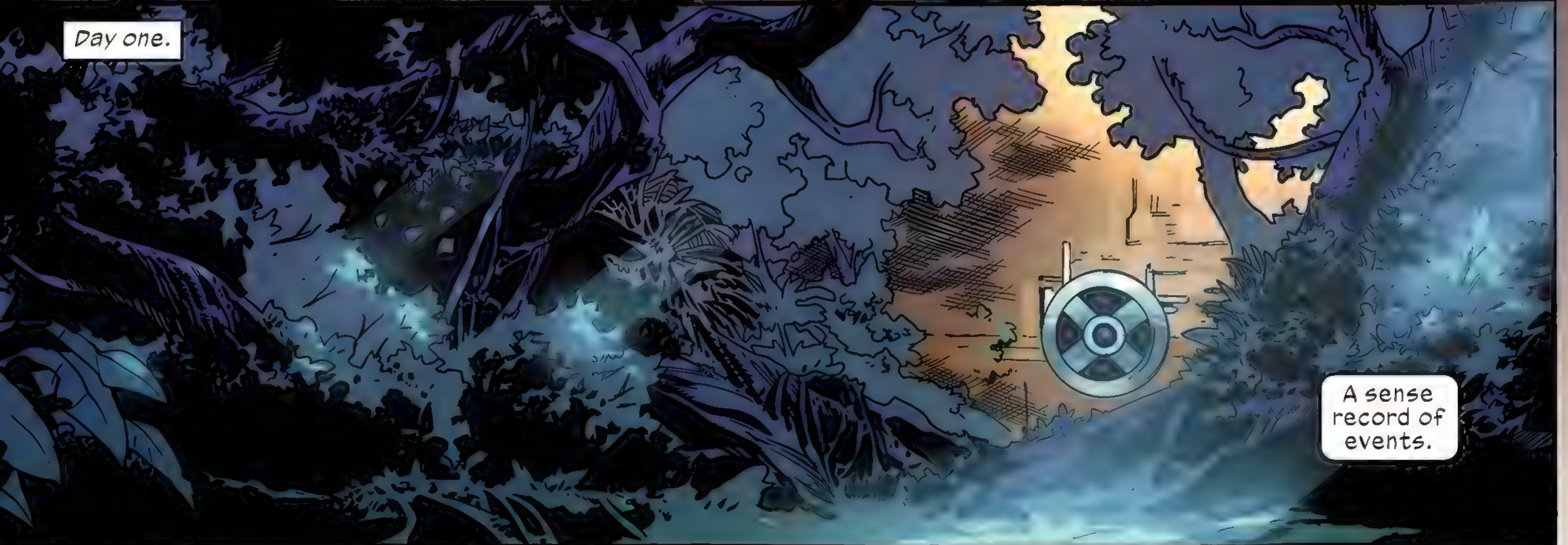
South America.
The Vault.

From this point forward, you cannot
depend on time to function in any
manner resembling normal. It waxes
and wanes, like temporal tides.

This is,
however,
the past.

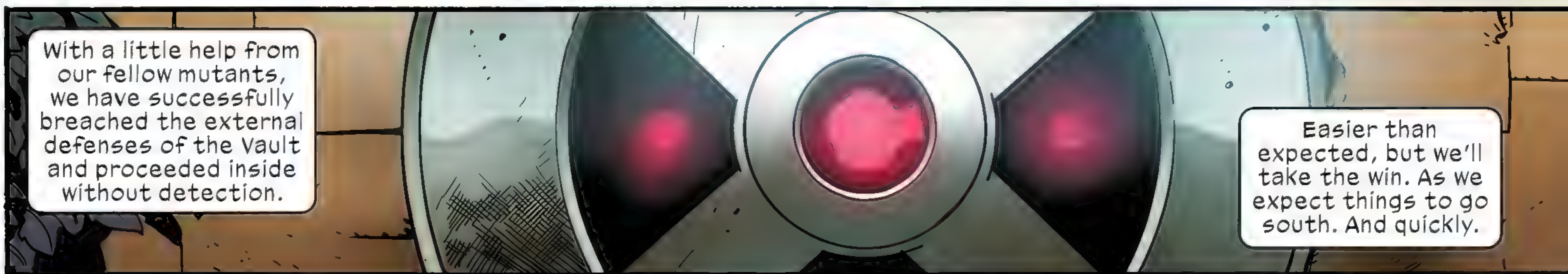


Day one.



A sense
record of
events.

With a little help from
our fellow mutants,
we have successfully
breached the external
defenses of the Vault
and proceeded inside
without detection.



Easier than
expected, but we'll
take the win. As we
expect things to go
south. And quickly.

Our team
is *Darwin*,
Wolverine
and me.



Our objective is to ascertain the threat
level and potential weaknesses of the
Vault and the full capabilities of what
lies within and those of the children.

Good luck, they
said before they
sent us in here...



I think
we're going
to need it.



Oh man...
look at the size
of that place.
Massive.

There's
gotta be, what,
a million people in
there? Maybe
more?



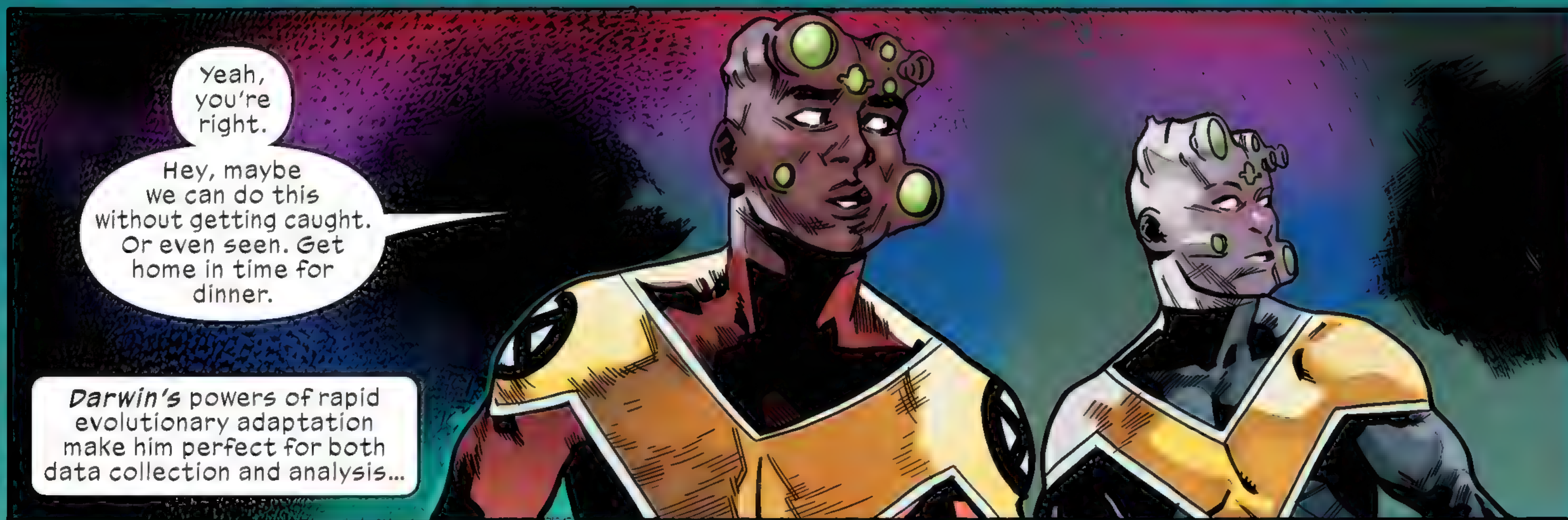
It could
certainly hold
that. No doubt.
But it's pretty
unlikely.

*Did you
read the file? One
of the main reasons
we're in here is because
we just don't know
enough about
these guys...*



But it's been theorized that--for
whatever reason--the *Children of
the Vault* have engaged in strict
population control.

Hrmpt. Well...
that theory seems *sound*.
There may be a few who don't
register a heat signature, but from what
I'm seeing, that city is pretty
sparsely populated.



Yeah,
you're
right.

Hey, maybe
we can do this
without getting caught.
Or even seen. Get
home in time for
dinner.

Darwin's powers of rapid
evolutionary adaptation
make him perfect for both
data collection and analysis...

...while *Wolverine's* are essential
to our long-term survival. Against
both environment and adversary.

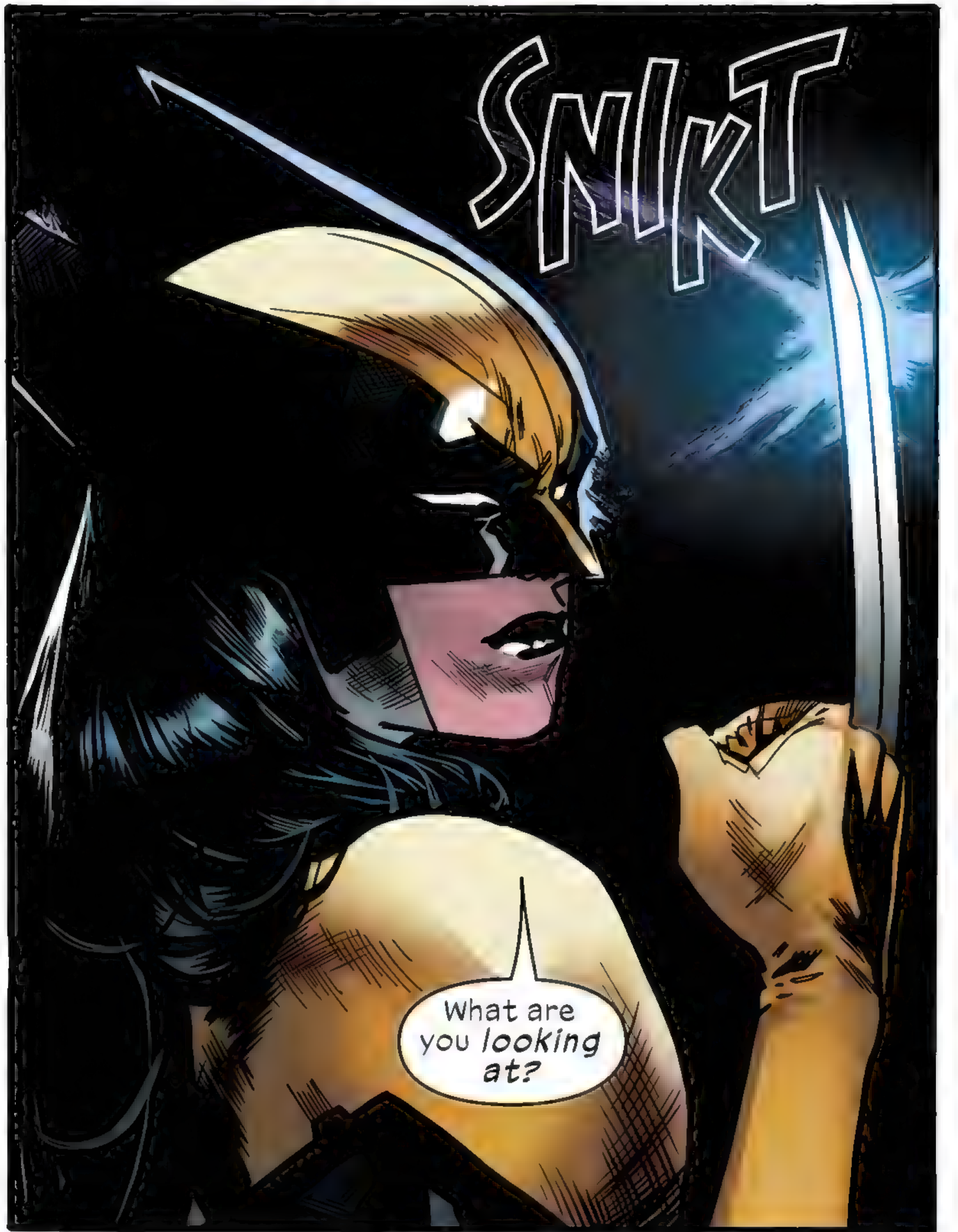


Prickly
though...

Not gonna
happen if the
two of you don't
keep it
down.



And how do
I feel about
that?



What are
you looking
at?



I'm feeling
pretty
good.

My powers make me a redundancy--a literal backup for both--extra surveillance and survival when needed or extra muscle if that's what's called for.

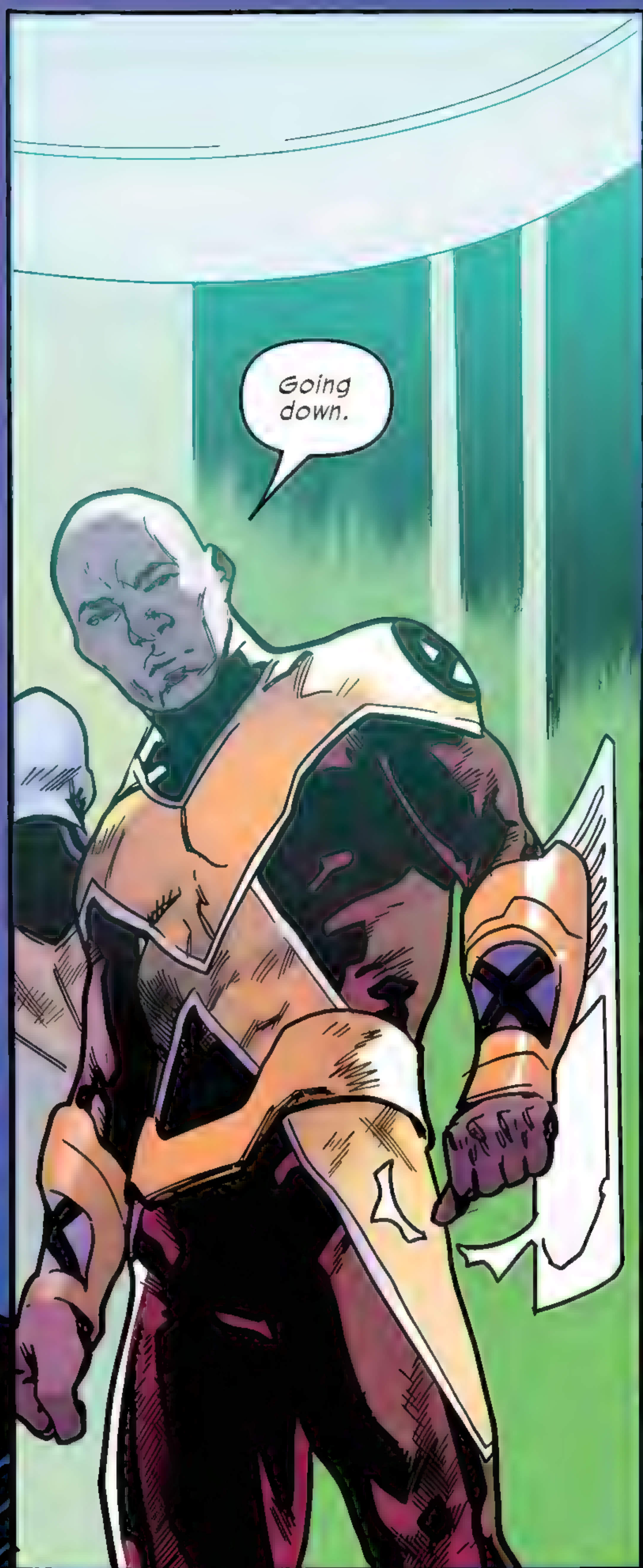


With any luck, we'll be out of here in a day or two. A week tops.

So here's one for luck...



Going down.



This is *Synch*. Descending into the Vault.



The real mission begins now.



MEDICAL REPORT

PATIENT FILE: #14

RE: Post-resurrection analysis of Synch [Everett Thomas]

[Krakoa]...[MED]
[.....][FIL]

ADDENDUM: MANIFESTATION

As stated in earlier notes: Synch clearly demonstrated a four percent increase in power post-resurrection than what he displayed while undergoing testing at the Massachusetts Academy during his previous life. There were other slight anomalies to his baseline scans, but they were so minuscule compared to his power increase that I wrote them off as fluctuations and focused primarily on the more dominant measurables.

Now, after a series of follow-up scans, it has become obvious that Synch's power no longer has a dormant and active state. Instead, it is clear that while he may not be acquiring powers he is in proximity to, his Synchronistic field is constantly seeking out a live connection to other power sets.

This seemed, at first, to be a potential secondary mutation, but now I think it is going to be a potential reoccurring phenomenon among all resurrected mutants. A mutant husk grown from mutant's DNA is a tabula rasa of mutant powers -- a body that has never been "mutant active." However, the backup that is then placed in the husk is one that has been "mutant active" before, often times for years.

So when that experienced mutant mind activates their powers inside a never-before, powered husk, I believe this "breakthrough" experience -- a first breach of a mutant womb -- enables a mutant to surpass their original power levels and possible native parameters.

In Synch's case, I believe that his adaptability is no longer confined to previous operational limits. This merits further observation.

- Dr. Cecelia Reyes



AND STEP BACK IN

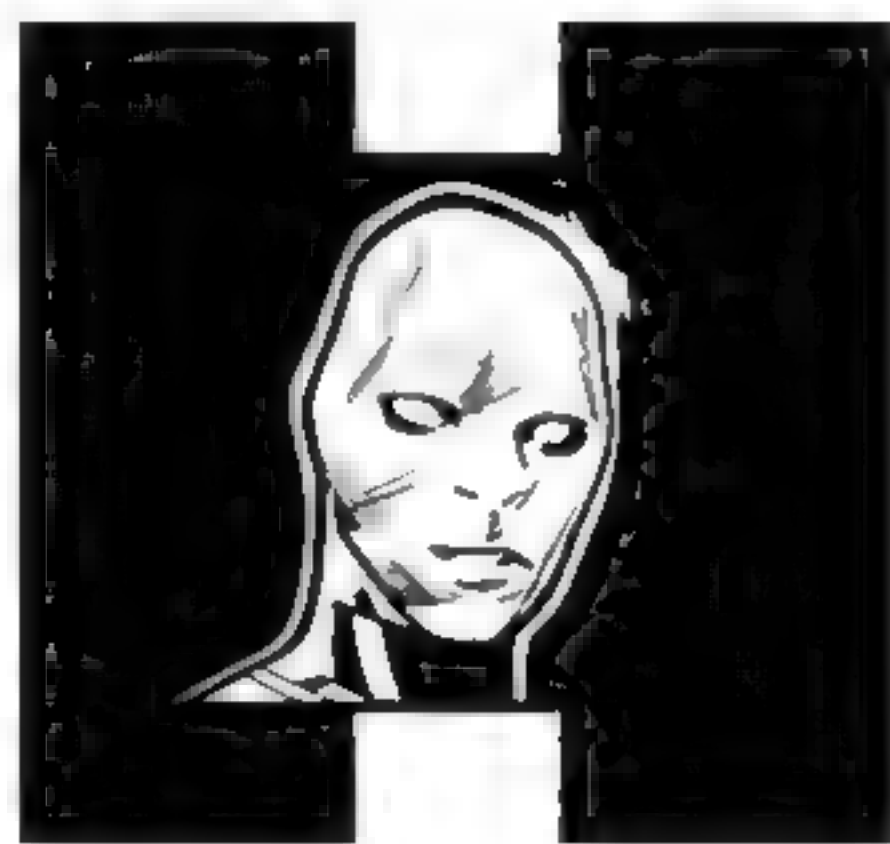
The Children of the Vault -- a highly evolved and highly dangerous super-powered group developed via exposure to temporal acceleration -- have re-appeared.

Wolverine, Synch and Darwin entered the Vault to evaluate this threat, knowing only that time flows differently inside.

Everything else remains to be discovered.



Wolverine



Darwin



Synch

In the center of the Vault is the Dome.
In the heart of the Dome is the City.

Scanning
for
contagion.



Scan
complete. [Subject
clean.]



Child
identified.

Class:
Serafina.

Level:
Two.



The Vault
welcomes you
home.



Report.
Report.
Report.
Report.



Downloading...

Primary analysis:

Mission failure.



Secondary analysis:

Increased threat activity level of non-augmented, naturally occurring human population.

[Non-posthuman resistance expected. Threat level: Secondary.]



Increased threat level activity of *Homo superior*.

[Mutant resistance expected. Threat level: Primary.]



Conclusion:

Vault opening delayed. Child-level: Three necessary for successful occupation/subjugation of external environment [world].



City [upgrade]: Global.

Class: A.I.

Level: Three.

Hard not to learn a hard lesson.

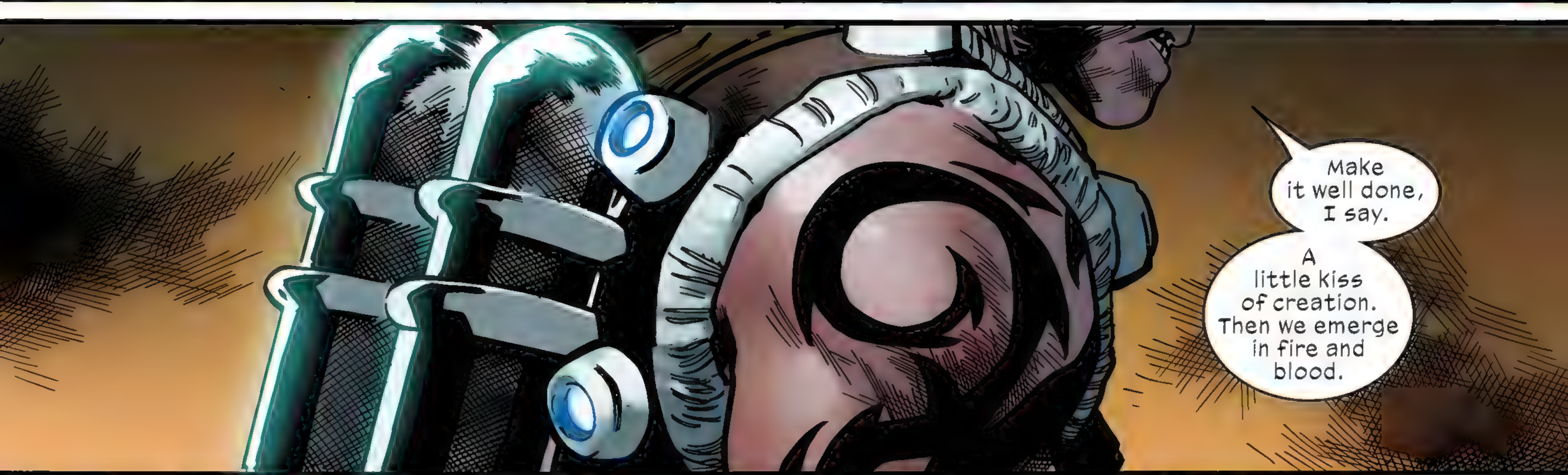
They've grown into something greater than anticipated. We're not strong enough for them.

We need to be... more.



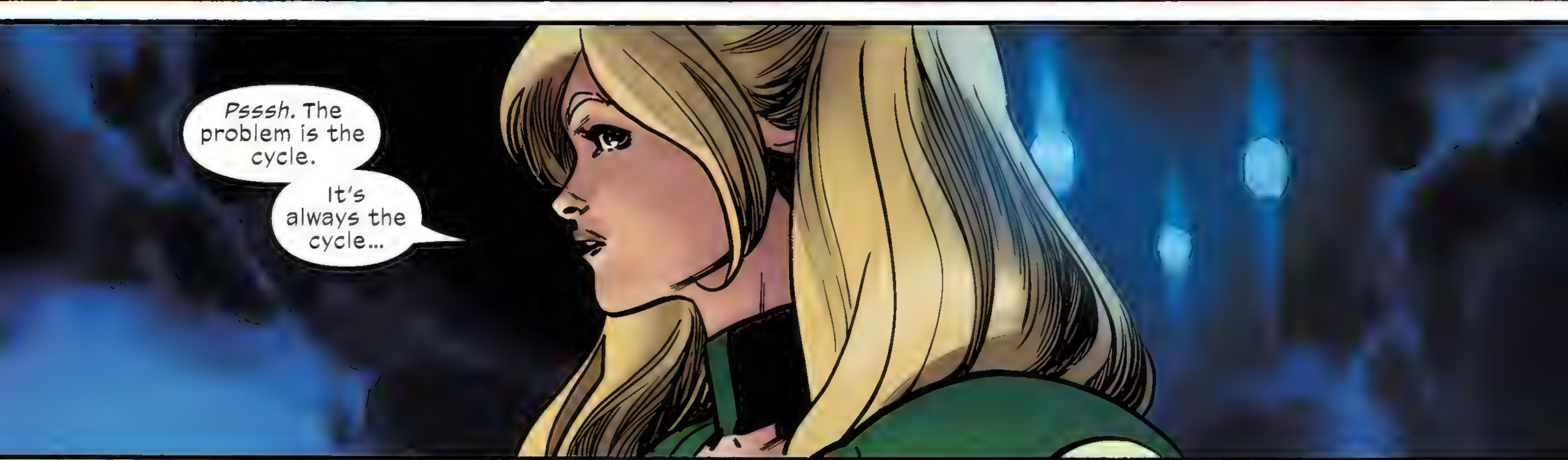
So back
into the pot
we go.

Terrific.



Make
it well done,
I say.

A
little kiss
of creation.
Then we emerge
in fire and
blood.



Psssh. The
problem is the
cycle.

It's
always the
cycle...



Which
yields for
nothing.

I will
fall forever
that the city
stands. It
would be--

Attention!



Asymmetrical
breach.

Scanning for
contagion.

Scan complete.
[CONTAMINATED.]



Subjects
unidentified.

Class:
Unknown.

Level:
Unknown.

Anomaly
detected.

Protect
the City!

Protect
the City!

Protect
the City!

Here's something to keep
in mind regarding these...
memory reports.

As I understand it--or
better put--how it was
explained to me...

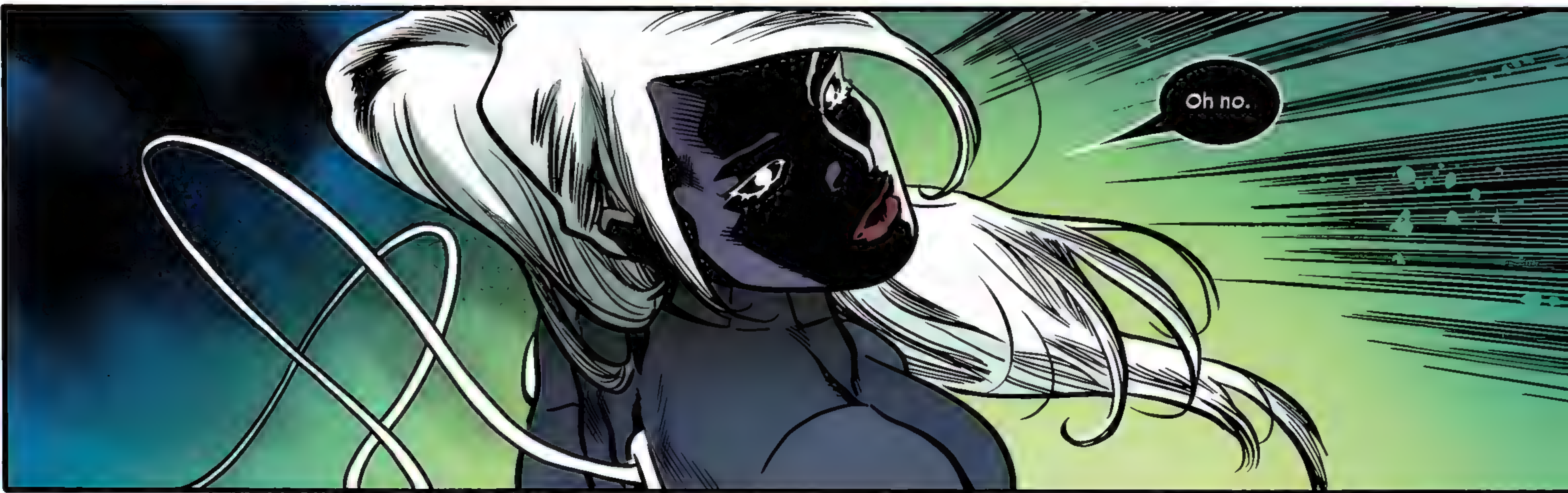
...is that the brain
stores memories
atemporally and in
an interconnected
manner that
resonates.

Sounds like
nonsense,
right? But what
it actually
means is this:

We remember
what *matters*
most.

This is, after
all, what makes
nostalgia so
powerful.







So if something happens
five years from now--but
it reminds me of something
that happened last week...

...that means I stand a better
chance of remembering that
specific memory in the future
instead of the other memories
that surrounded it.

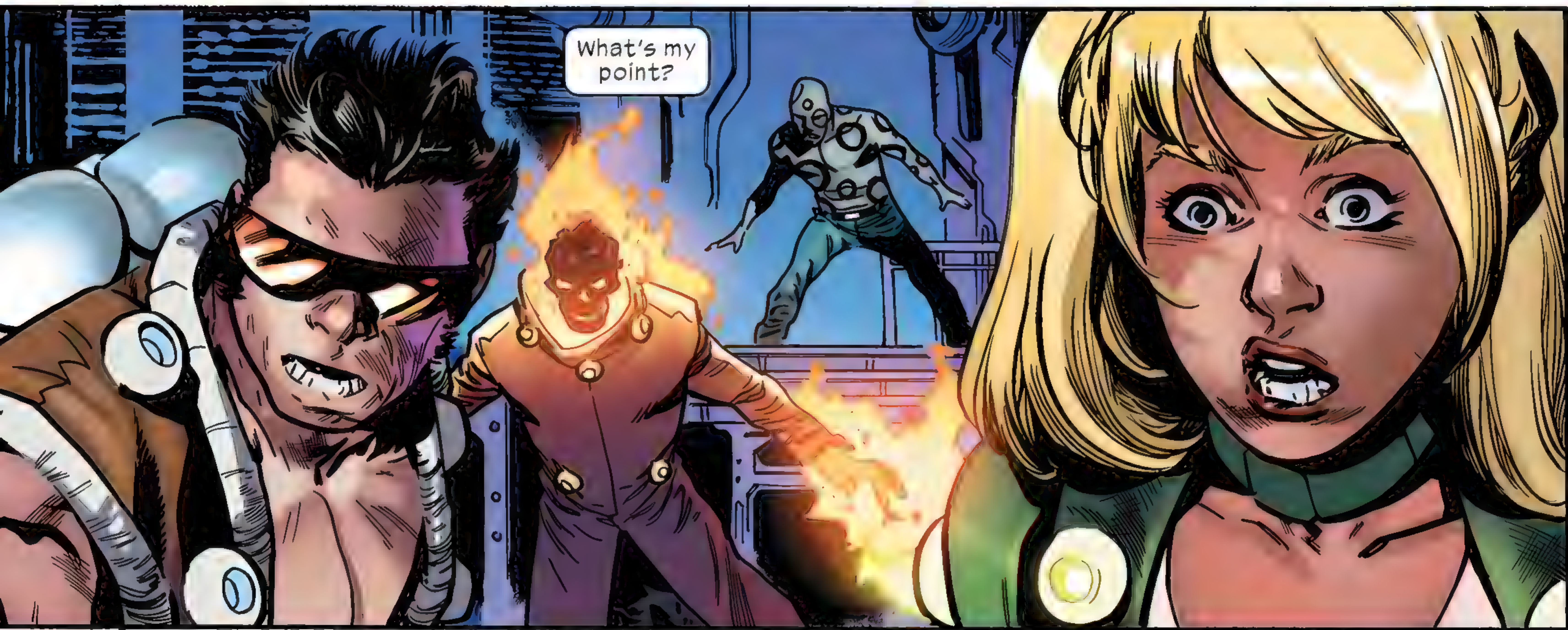


The thing is, this
doesn't have anything
to do with facts or
logic--or what actually
happened--it's just how
you remember it.

How it
affected
you.



In your
head...and
in your
heart.



What's my
point?

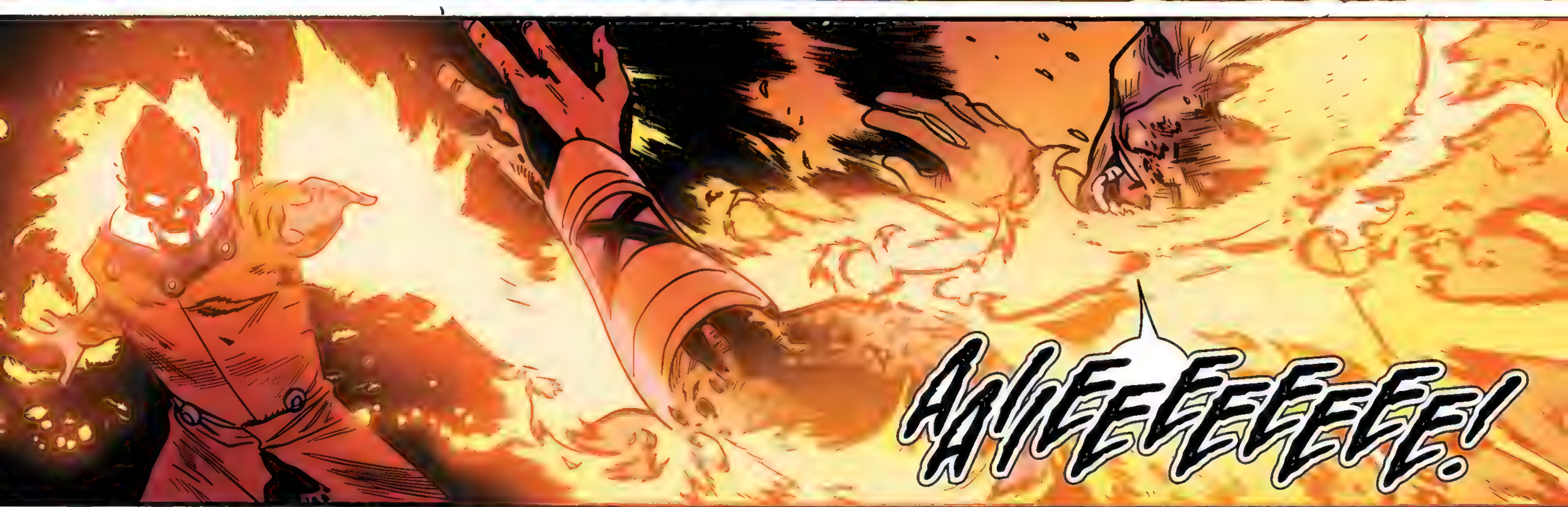


Darwin, Laura...
myself...in the
Vault, we all
counted the
days...

Every single
one of them...



But what we remember--
what mattered to each of
us--colors our memory of
the experience.



AAAAAEEEEEE!



~Glub!~

~Glub!~





Eh?

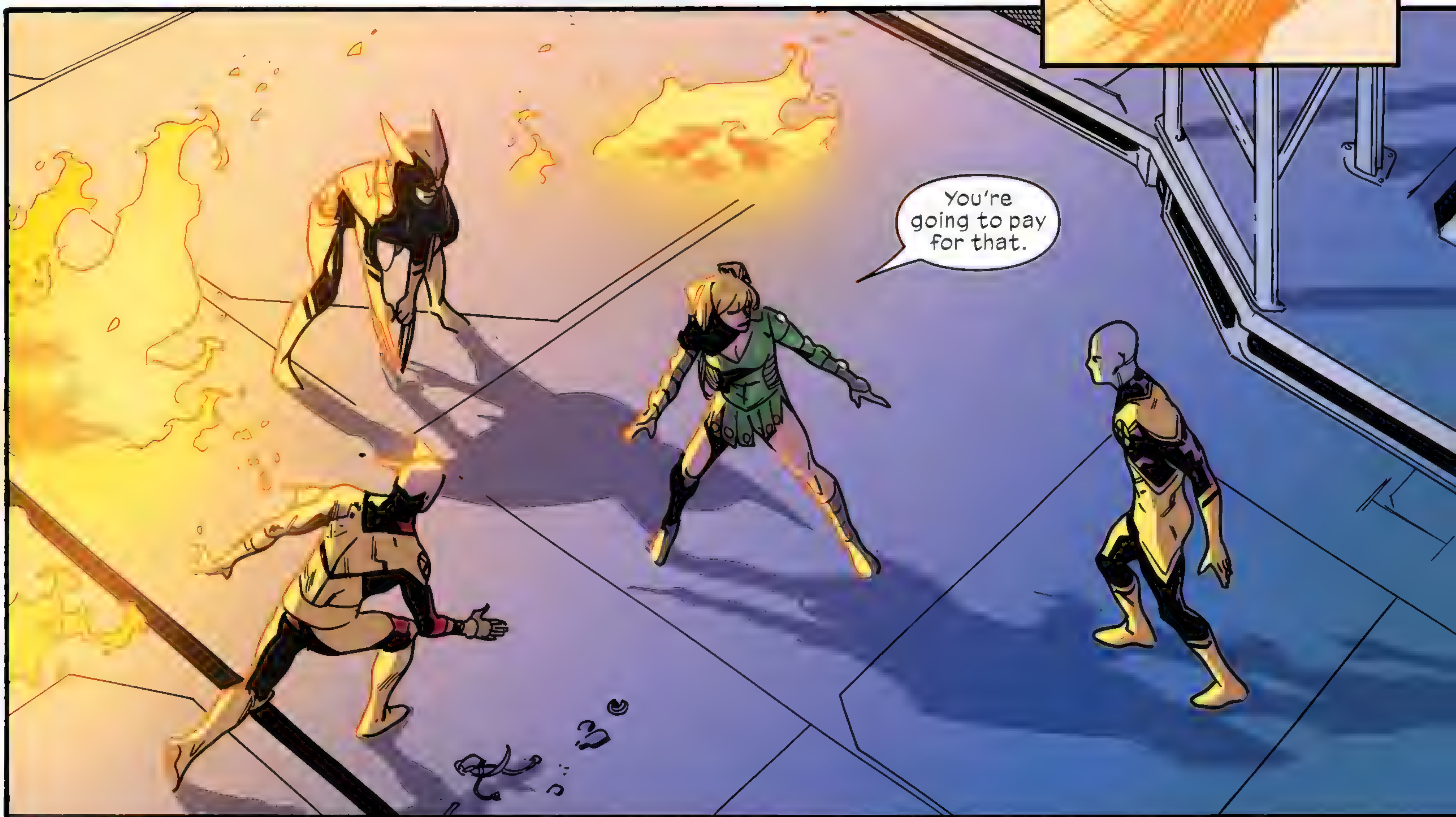
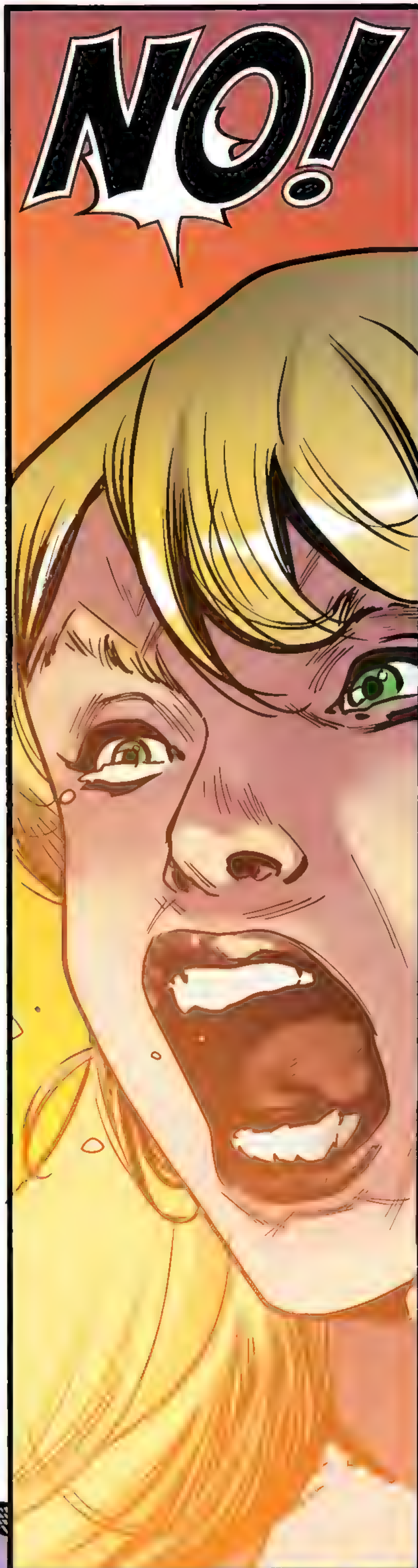


I didn't think you could copy anyone's powers except mutants.

I couldn't...



Looks like that's changed.





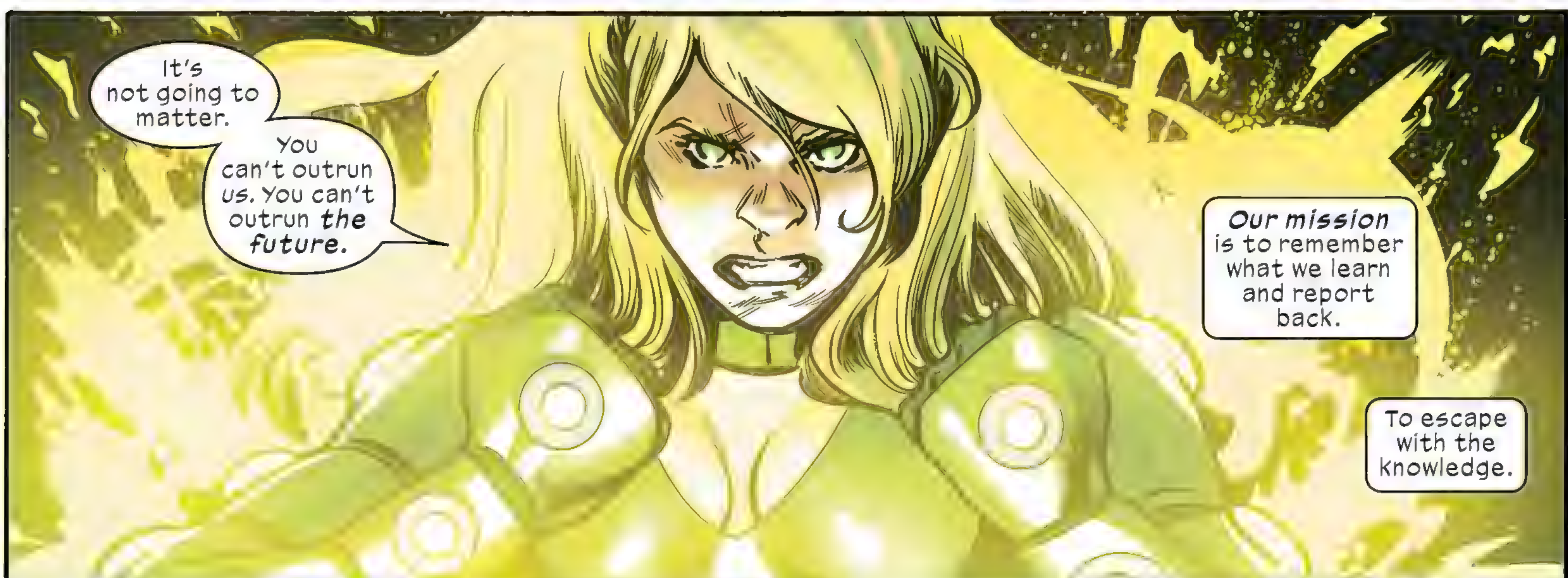
Oh man...
she's...she's
gonna blow.

Back up!
We need to
get clear.
Now!



You
mutants...
thinking you can
run from
this...

Run all
you want. Run
as fast as
you can.



It's
not going to
matter.

You
can't outrun
us. You can't
outrun *the*
future.

Our mission
is to remember
what we learn
and report
back.

To escape
with the
knowledge.

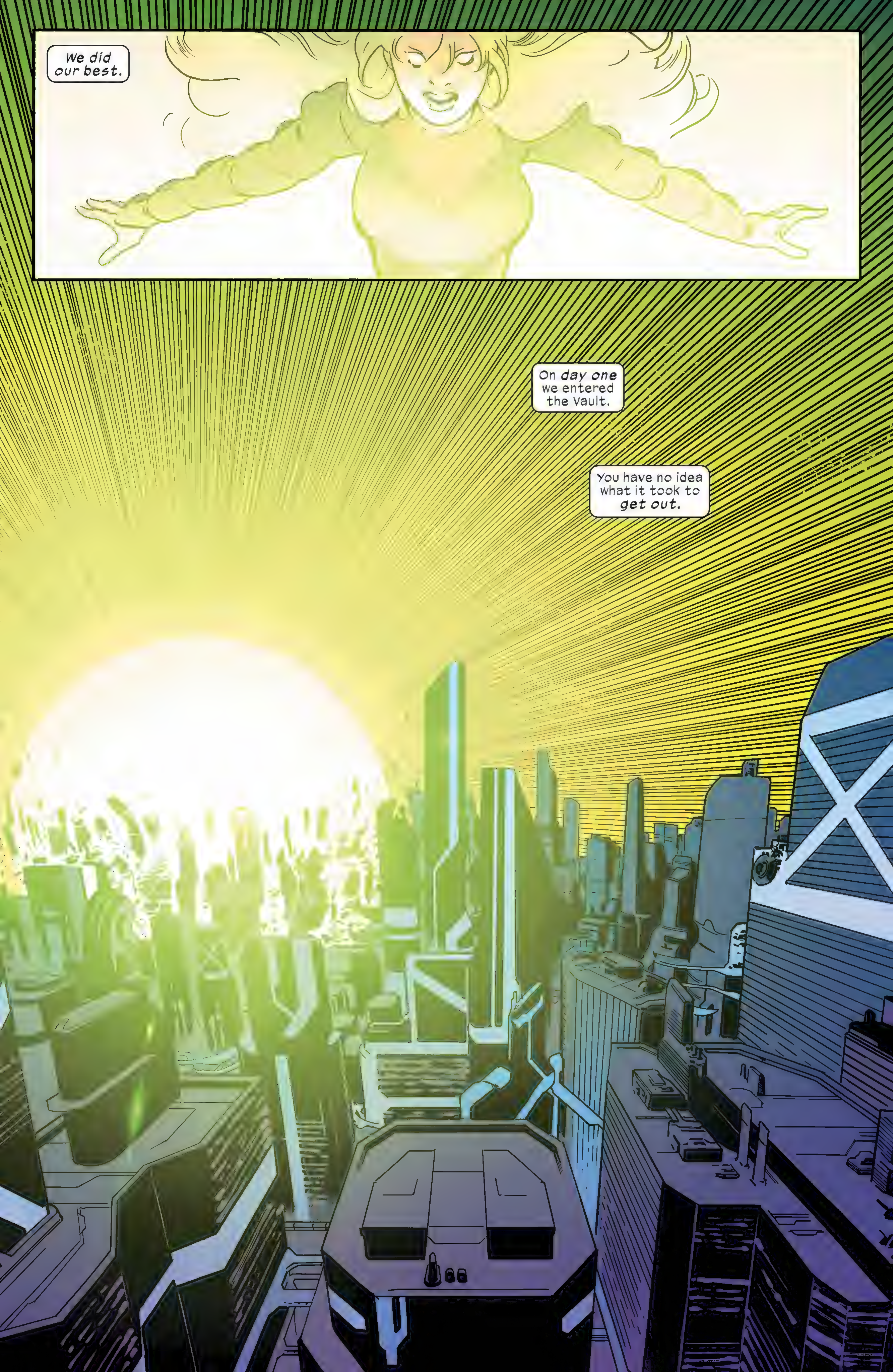
I'm telling
you the
truth, man...

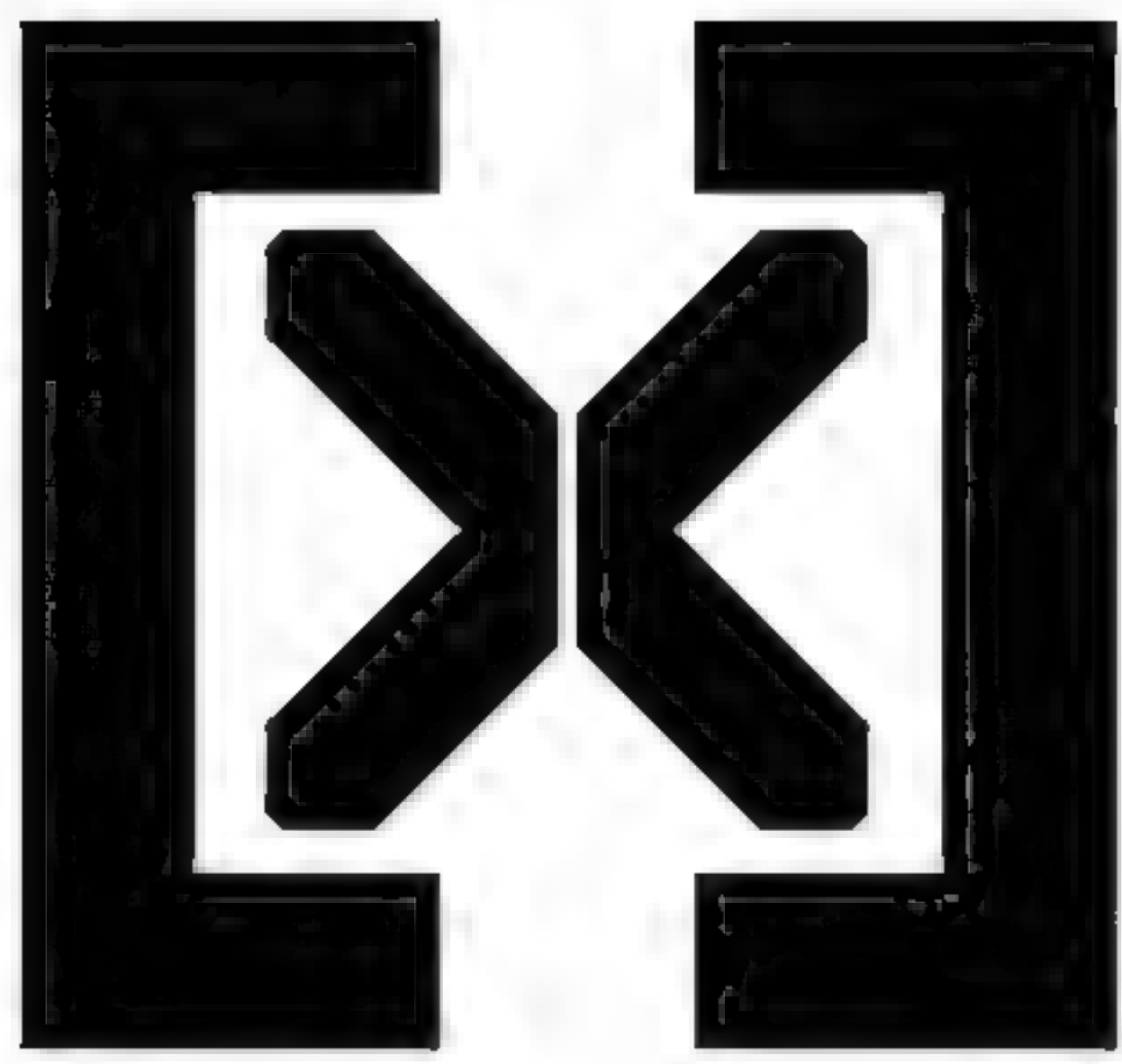


*We did
our best.*

*On day one
we entered
the Vault.*

*You have no idea
what it took to
get out.*





[the_2nd_law]
[of_mutantdom]

+

MURDER NO MAN

+

-- Confidential --

As this Council is completely aware, only FORCE protocols allow the suspension of the three laws of Krakoa. “Murder No Man” is the predictable primary concern of this body at this time.

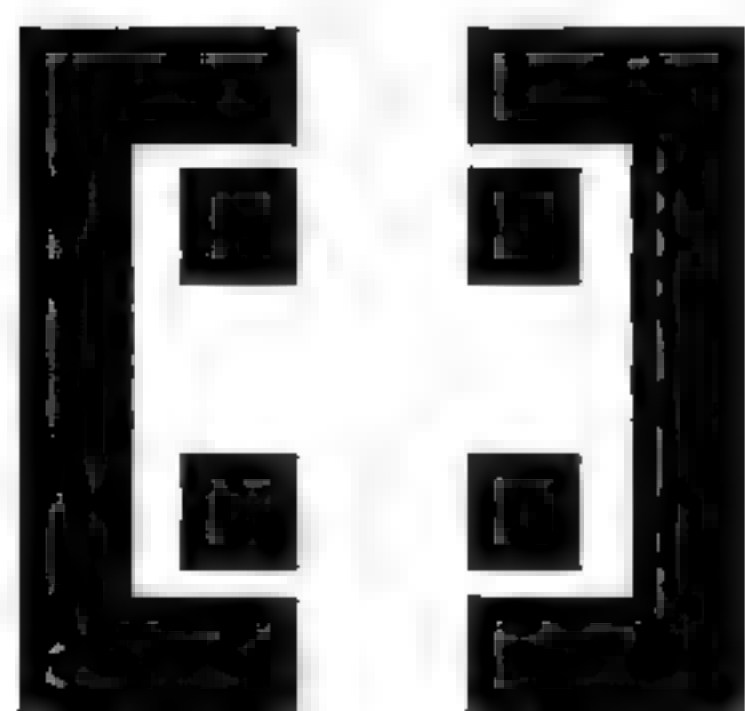
Our approved reconnoissance operation into the Vault to ascertain the threat level of the Children of the Vault is expected to face stiff, and probably lethal, opposition during the mission. To compound this, it is the Council’s expectation that said opposition will be progressively post-human in nature.

As the Children fall outside of the normal definition of “human,” and the risk of data recovery seems improbable using current legal methods, FORCE protocol is initiated for this mission.

-- X --



[.....]
[is_suspended]



[.....X]
[.....X]
[Krakoa_1]
[Vault_0]



Out of the Vault

21

[.....WOLVERINE]

[.....SYNCH]

[.....DARWIN]



Enter the Vault.



*This is the past.
South America.
The Vault.*

You can measure in
hours--*maybe minutes*--how
quickly I realized life in the
Vault would be an exercise in
sacrifice and pain.

Looking back--*thinking
of it now*--it was all
just...*too much.*



The City was too
big. The Vault itself,
even larger.

The enormity of it was
paralyzing. The scale,
inconceivable.

Before we ran--as we healed--we watched the destroyed section of the City begin to rebuild itself.

You have to understand, we don't come from a naturally self-healing world. *They do.*



So I understand why you picked us three to go inside the vault.

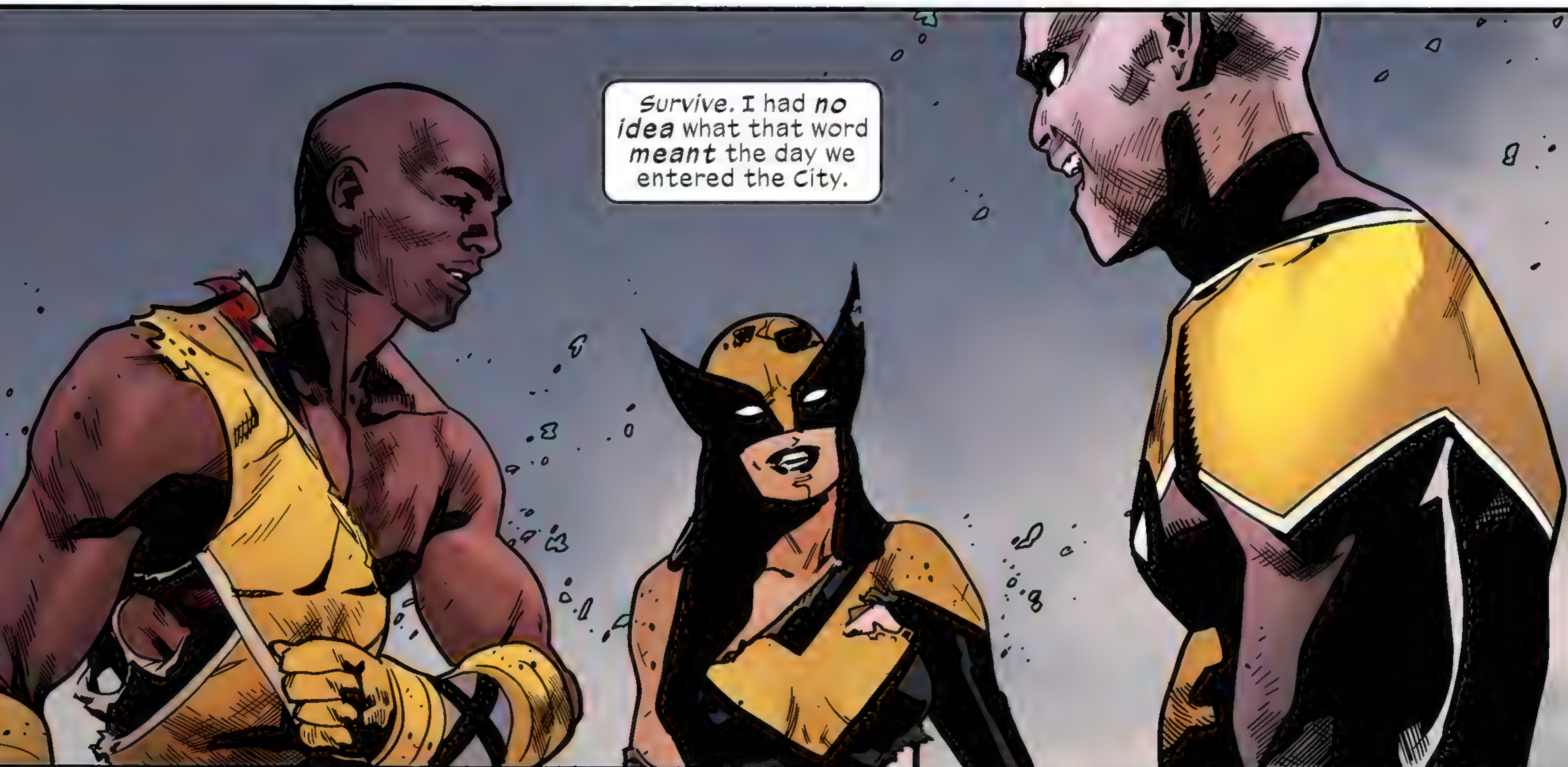


You thought--in combination--we could endure anything.

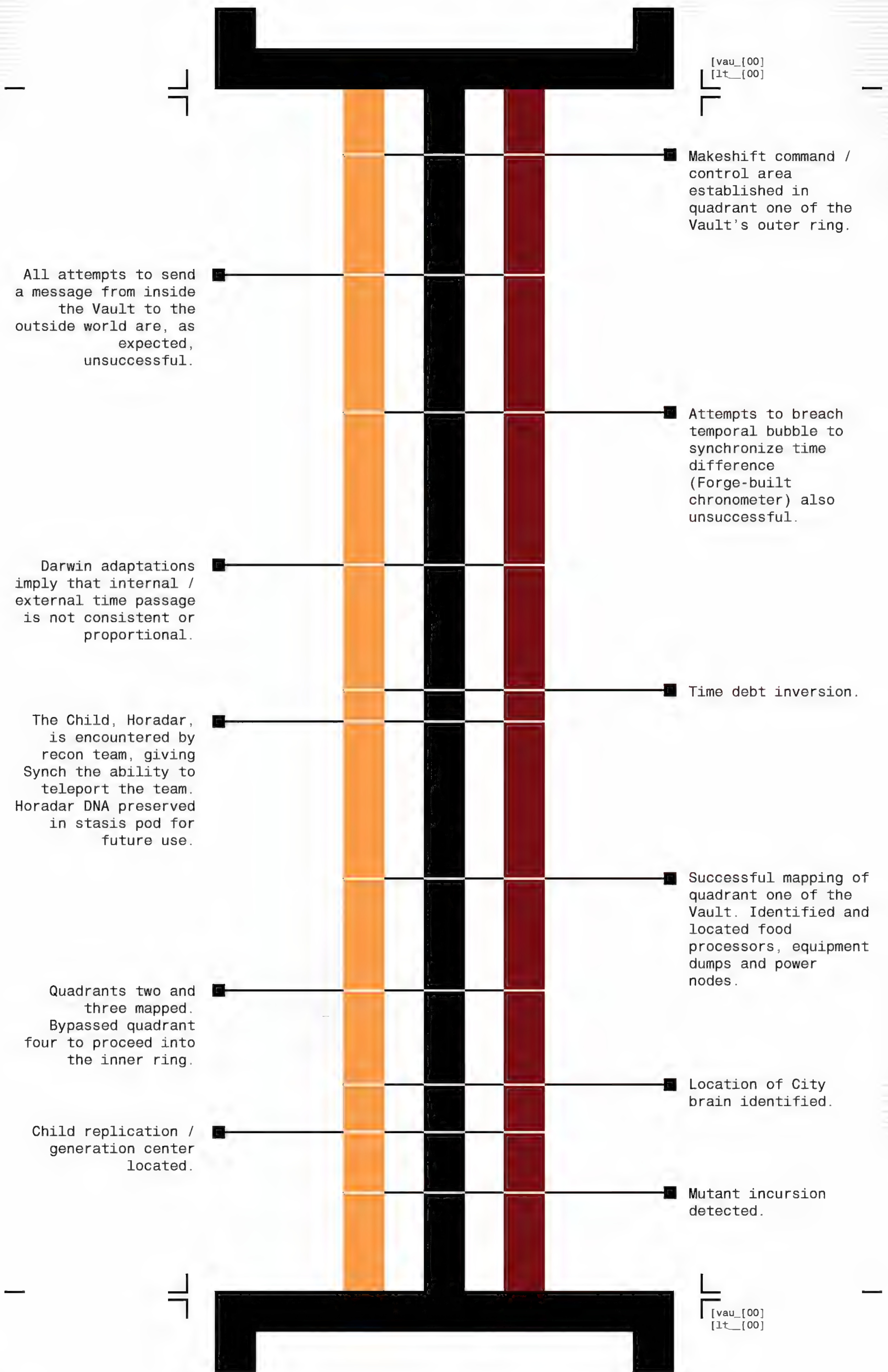
That we could somehow survive the raw creation found in this genesis tomb.



Survive. I had *no idea* what that word *meant* the day we entered the City.



The first fifty years were the *longest*.



All attempts to send a message from inside the Vault to the outside world are, as expected, unsuccessful.

Darwin adaptations imply that internal / external time passage is not consistent or proportional.

The Child, Horadar, is encountered by recon team, giving Synch the ability to teleport the team. Horadar DNA preserved in stasis pod for future use.

Quadrants two and three mapped. Bypassed quadrant four to proceed into the inner ring.

Child replication / generation center located.

[vau_{00}]
[1t_{00}]

Makeshift command / control area established in quadrant one of the Vault's outer ring.

Attempts to breach temporal bubble to synchronize time difference (Forge-built chronometer) also unsuccessful.

Time debt inversion.

Successful mapping of quadrant one of the Vault. Identified and located food processors, equipment dumps and power nodes.

Location of City brain identified.

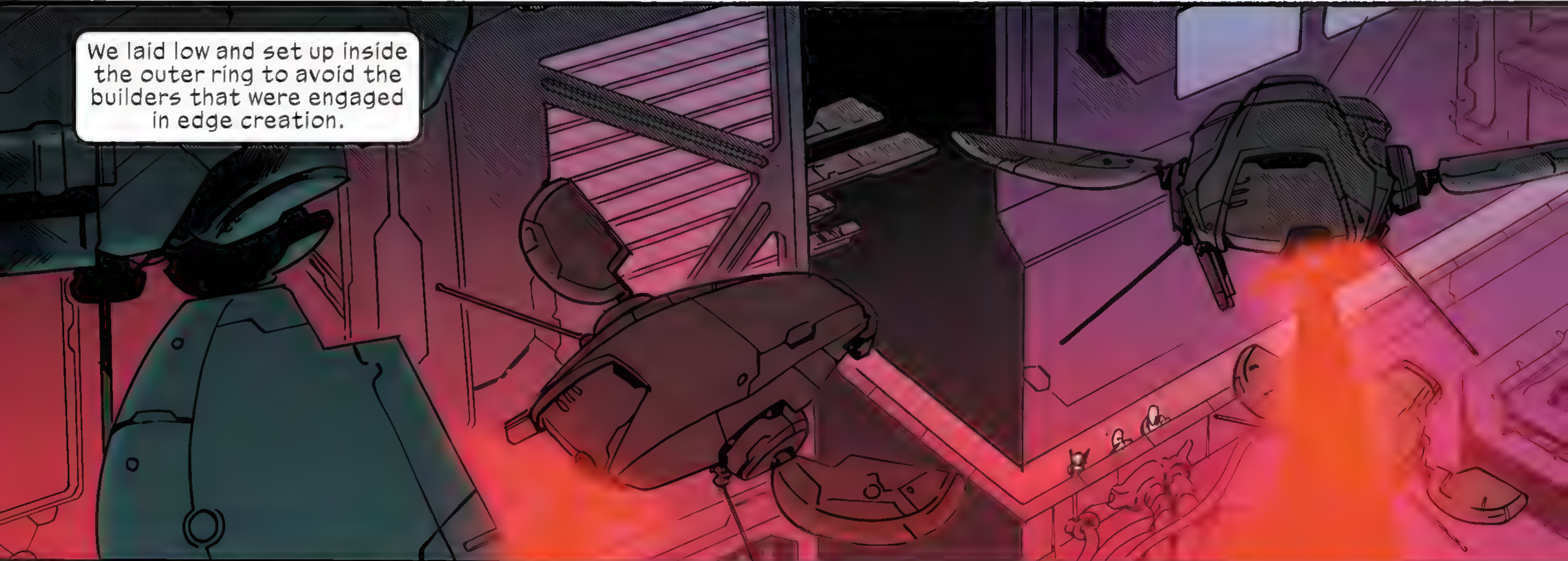
Mutant incursion detected.

[vau_{00}]
[1t_{00}]

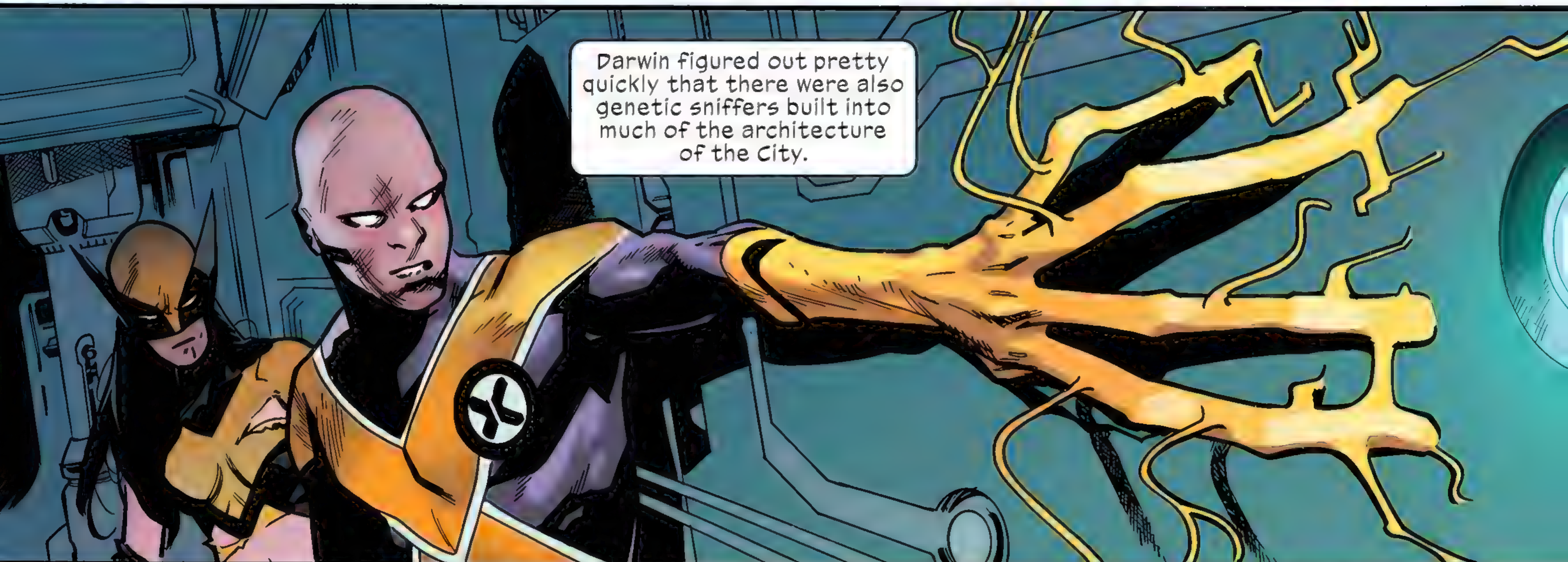
The Children must have assumed we were dead--vaporized or atomized or something--because they didn't try to find us.



We laid low and set up inside the outer ring to avoid the builders that were engaged in edge creation.



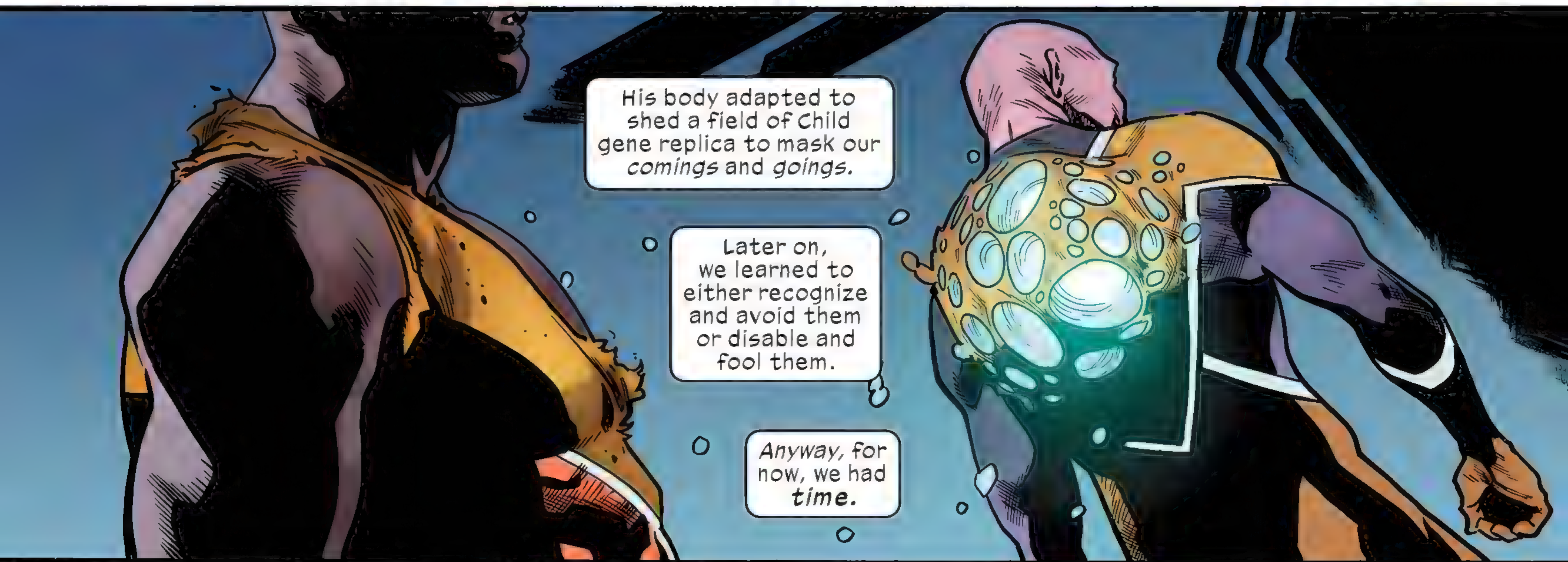
Darwin figured out pretty quickly that there were also genetic sniffers built into much of the architecture of the City.



His body adapted to shed a field of Child gene replica to mask our comings and goings.

Later on, we learned to either recognize and avoid them or disable and fool them.

Anyway, for now, we had time.



So we watched...
and learned.

We became aware of the
City pulsing and breathing
as it underwent the ebb and
flow of evolutionary leaps.

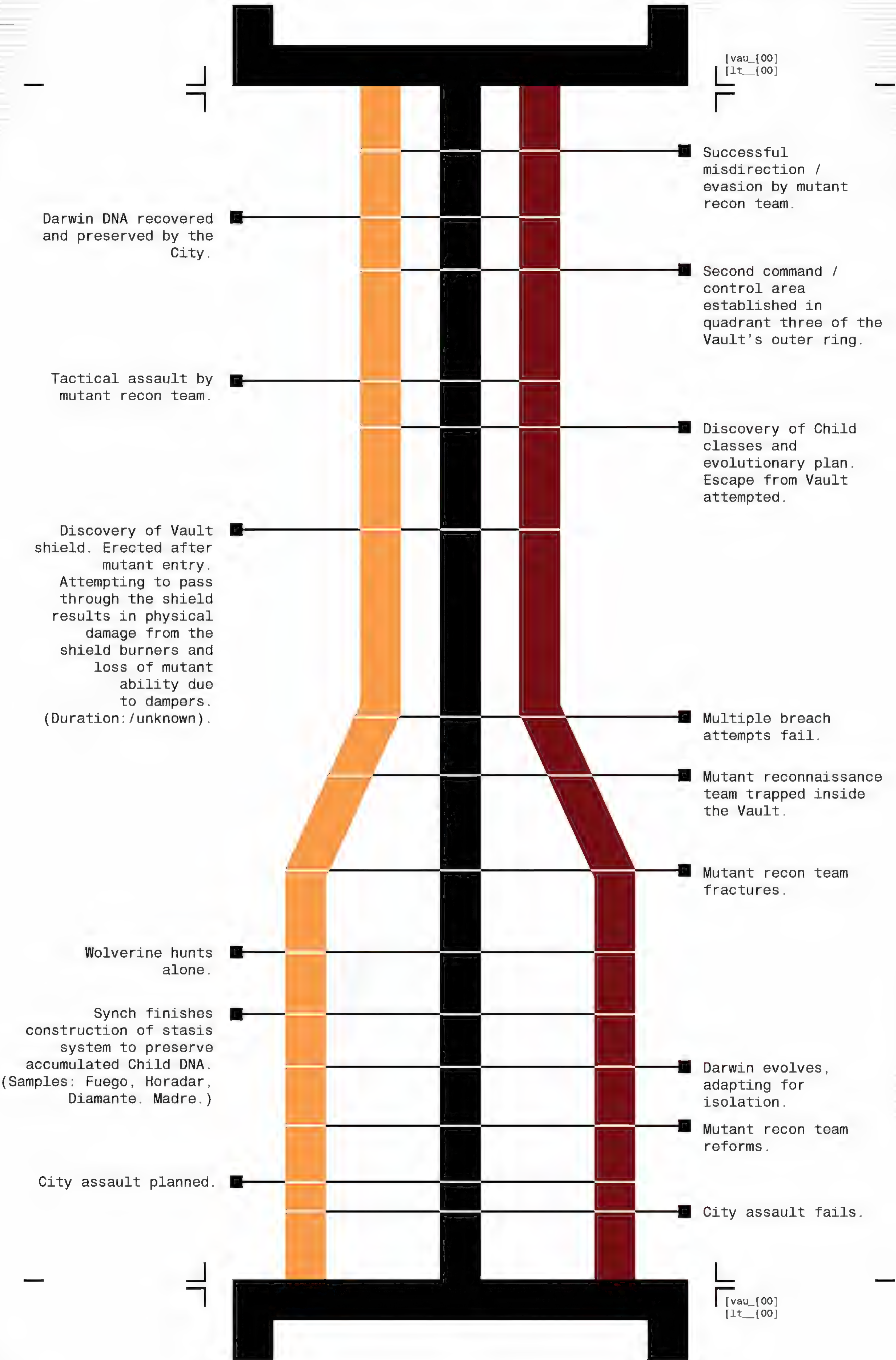
We acclimatized ourselves to
the cycles of the Vault and
timed our reconnaissance
missions for when the City
slept and the Children grew.

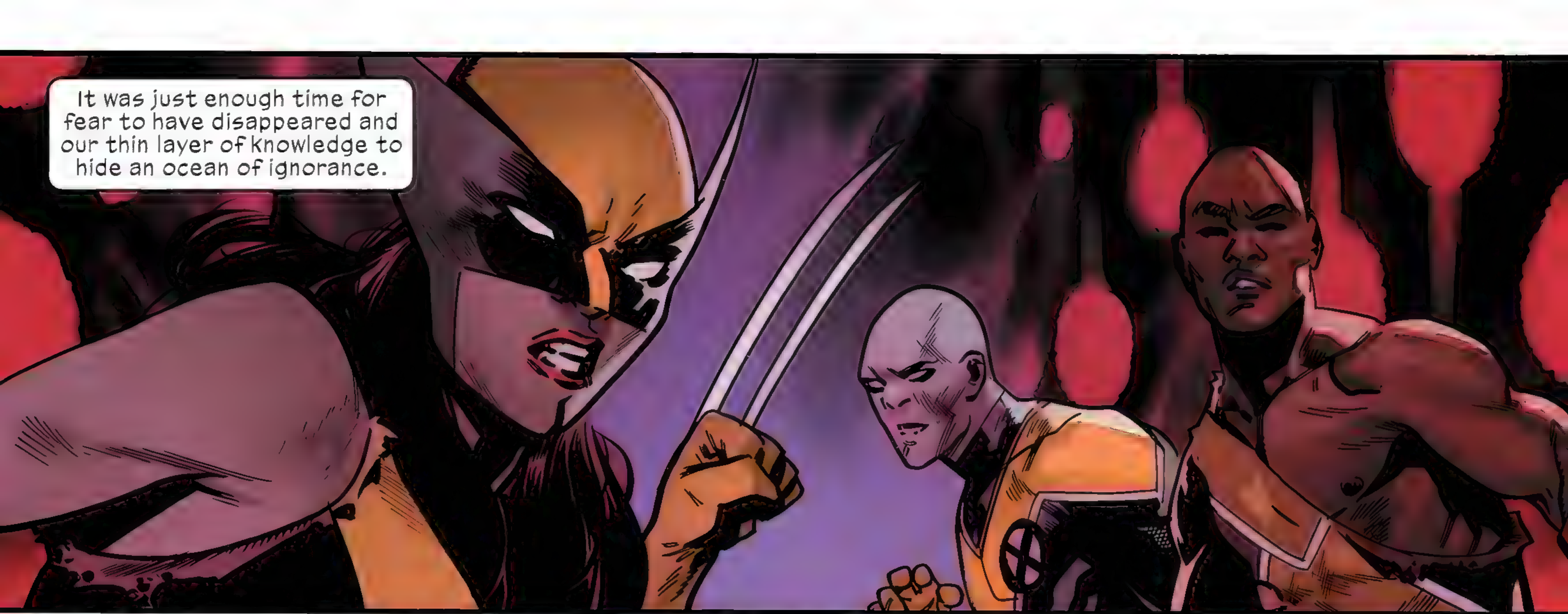
Two months of
dormancy for every
two of *growth*.

During their
season of night,
we haunted the
dreams of sleeping
Children.

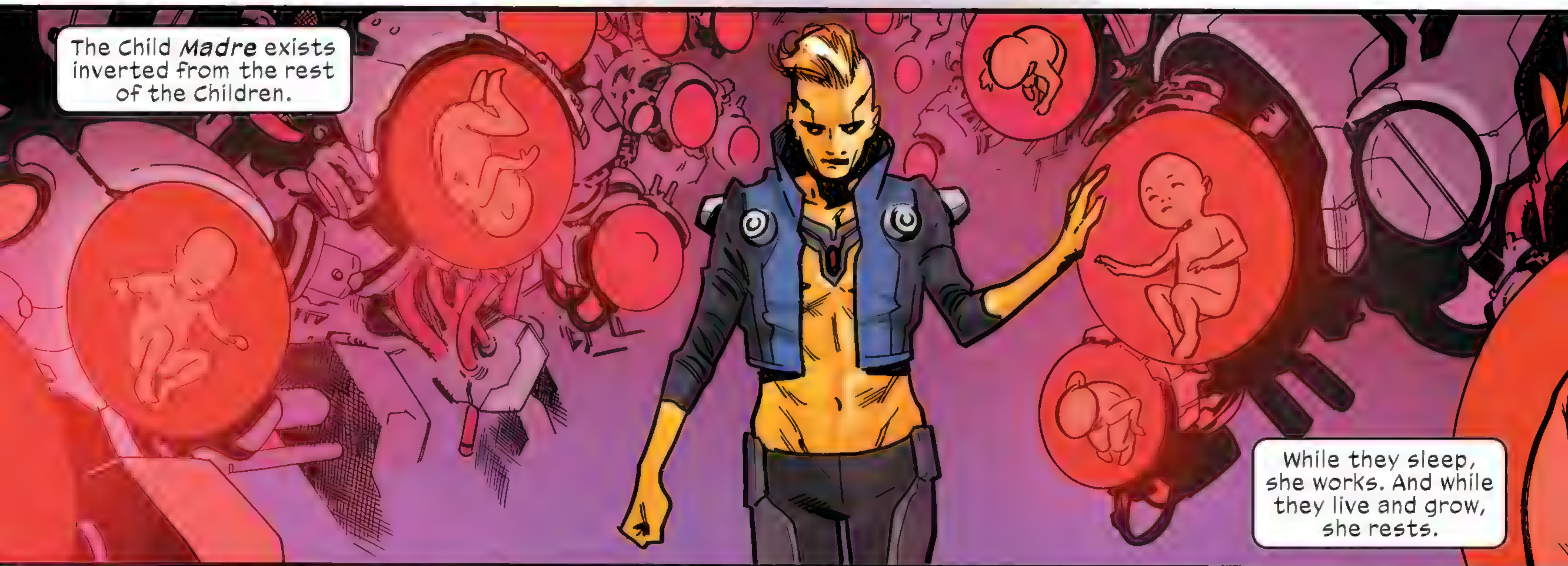
By the end of the sixth of
these cycles, we had gained
a surface understanding of
the Vault.

City mapping
of power nodes,
hatching chambers
and the brain of
the City itself.



A woman with a mask and a man with a sword. The woman is on the left, wearing a mask with a large eye and a dark, form-fitting suit. She has a determined expression. The man is on the right, wearing a yellow and black uniform with a circular emblem on the chest. He is holding a sword and looking towards the woman.

It was just enough time for fear to have disappeared and our thin layer of knowledge to hide an ocean of ignorance.

A man in a blue jacket and yellow shirt stands in the center, surrounded by numerous red spheres. Each sphere contains a small, glowing figure of a child. The man has a serious expression and is looking towards the viewer. The background is a complex, industrial-looking structure with various pipes and machinery.

The Child *Madre* exists inverted from the rest of the Children.

While they sleep, she works. And while they live and grow, she rests.

A large red sphere is on the left, and a blue structure is on the right. The blue structure has a curved, metallic appearance with various pipes and machinery. A small figure is visible on the blue structure, looking towards the red sphere.

On our first pass through the Crèche, where--like our mutant Arbor Magna--the bodies of reborn Child classes wait for rebirth and upgrades, we avoided her by chance...

...but on our second visit, our luck ran out.

A man in a blue jacket and a woman in a mask. The man is on the left, wearing a blue jacket and a yellow shirt. He is looking towards the woman. The woman is on the right, wearing a mask with a large eye and a dark, form-fitting suit. She is holding a sword and looking towards the man.

We made a *mistake*...

Are we sure tha--
Do it.

...and mistakes have consequences.

Hrrnkkk!

Our mistake wasn't getting caught...it was our plan of how to deal with this happening.

We had established a safe house of sorts as close to the inner ring of the Vault as possible.

We prepared an exit strategy, which included leaving behind evidence of our second death in the Vault.

Our error was believing in the idea that if you give them a win, it would be enough.

That our defeat--and their victory--would satisfy them. That they would *treasure* the trophy.

We didn't understand...

These people don't celebrate victory. They take their trophy and use it for other means...

Primarily, beating you to death with it.

When we had taken
our game of little
discoveries and
survival as far as
we could...



...we decided to
change the rules.



Seize fire from
the source...



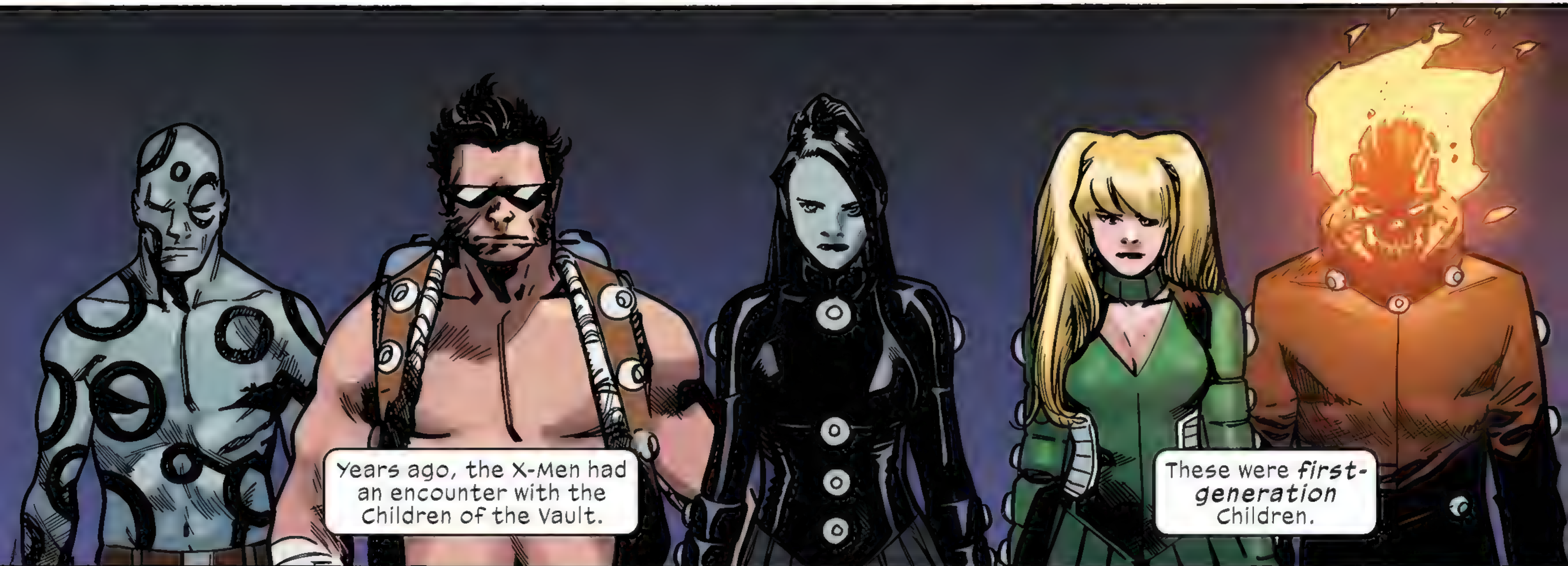
...and accumulate
real knowledge.

The child
Diamante was a
living repository of
Vault history.





His power was memory. He knew the City...and everything that the City knew.



Years ago, the X-Men had an encounter with the Children of the Vault.

These were *first-generation* Children.



And from their defeat at the hands of mutantdom...Earth's first post-humans learned that they too had to evolve. And the *second generation* of Children were produced and let loose on the world.

These children were captured, dissected and repurposed by Orchis as potential weapons at the creation of our nation-state.

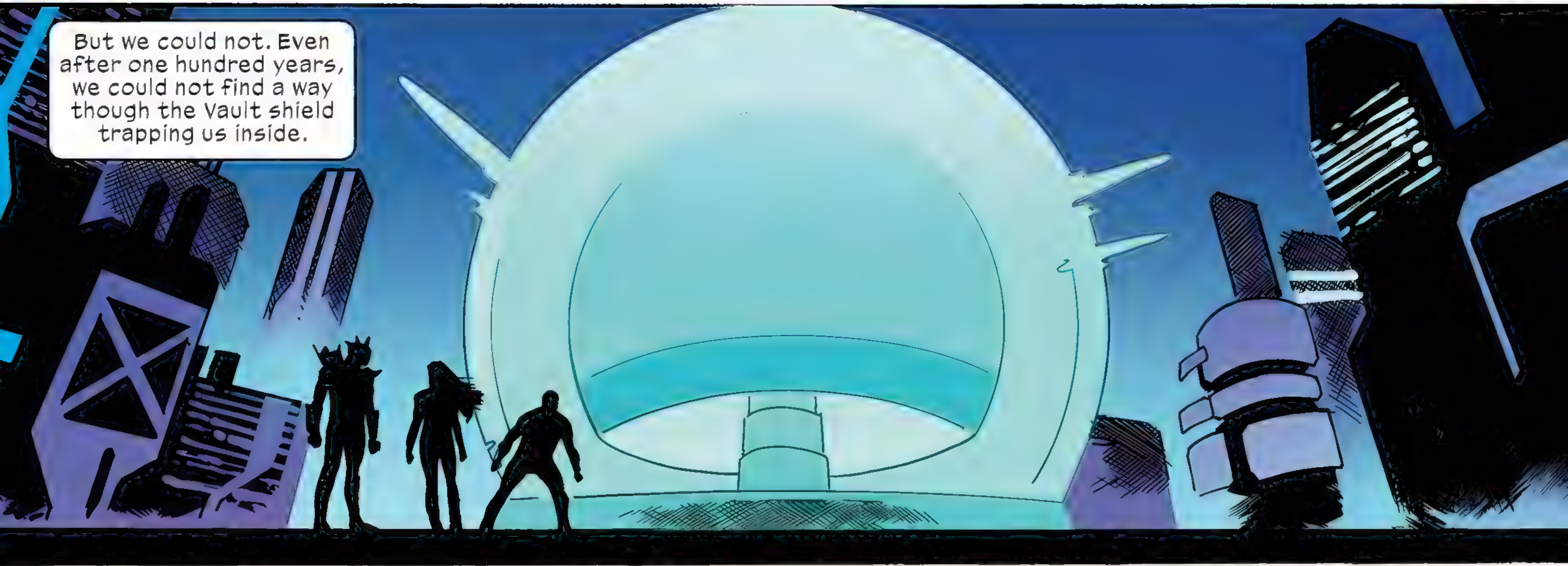


One, *Serafina*, escaped, and when the City learned their fate, it was decided that yet another evolutionary leap was needed.

This was to be the *third and final generation* of Children before they were released from the Vault to claim the Earth as their own.

With this, we had learned what we needed...and it was time to *return home*.

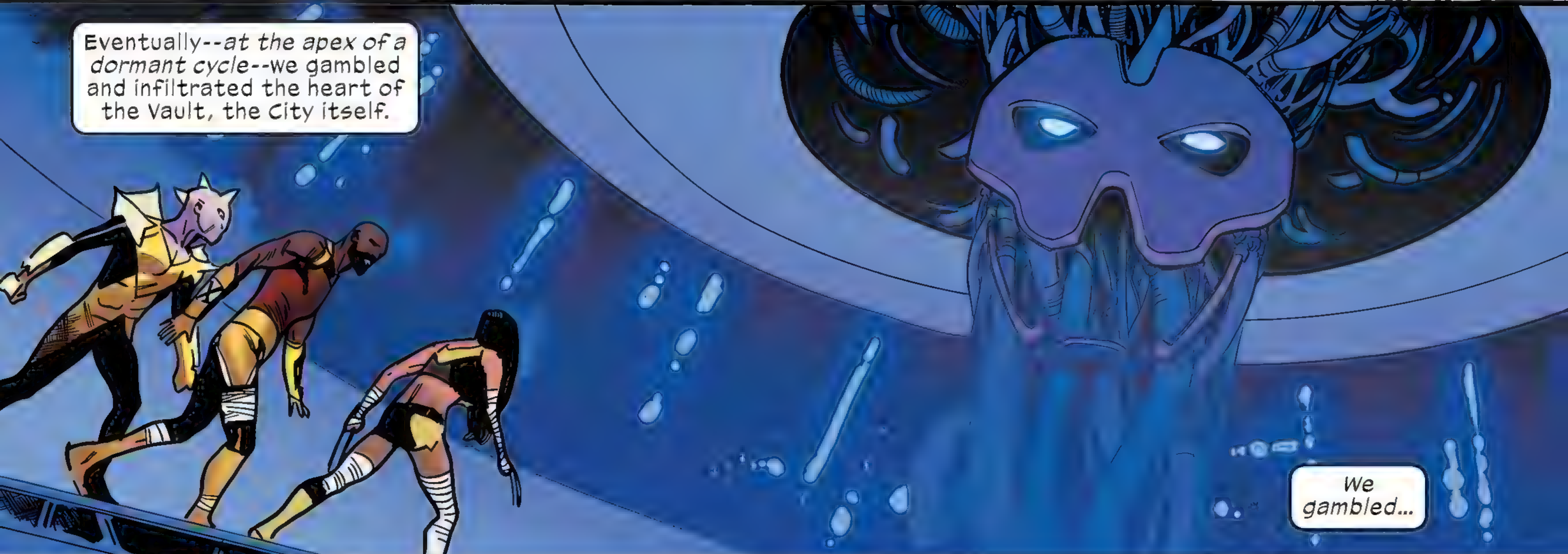
But we could not. Even after one hundred years, we could not find a way though the Vault shield trapping us inside.



In our temporal prison, we only had one option: continue to study--to learn--until we found a way to escape and make our way home.



Eventually--at the apex of a dormant cycle--we gambled and infiltrated the heart of the Vault, the City itself.



We gambled...



...and *lost*.

They had laid the perfect trap and waited patiently for decades...for us to walk right into it.



In retrospect, it was obvious they were after Darwin.

Laura and I--I don't remember exactly when I started calling her that instead of Wolverine, but I do remember the day she no longer seemed to mind--



--we were an afterthought.

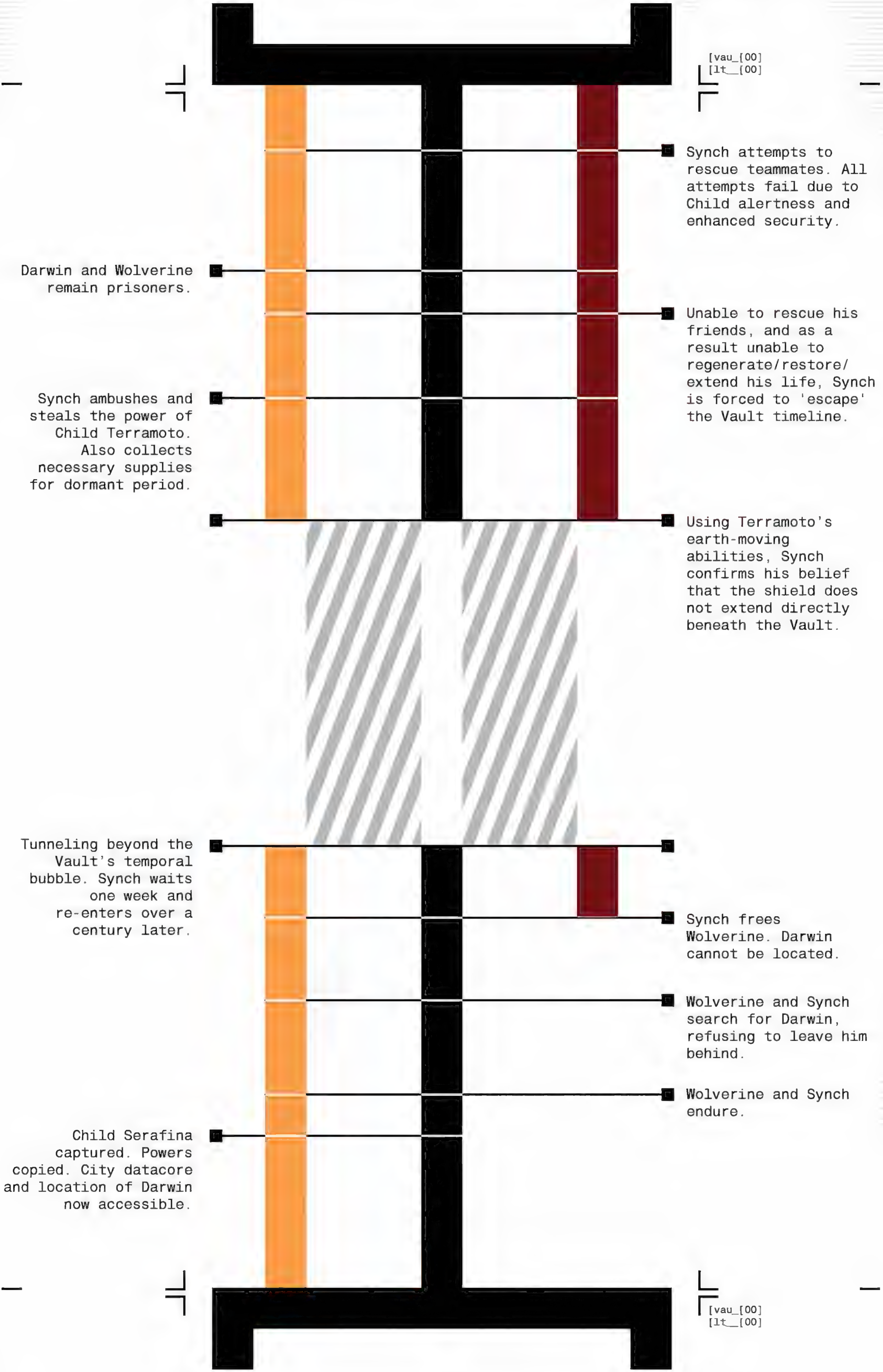
Which made losing her even worse. I should have held on...

I should have done more...



The years were made worse in isolation.

But it's the *regret* that made me feel *old*.





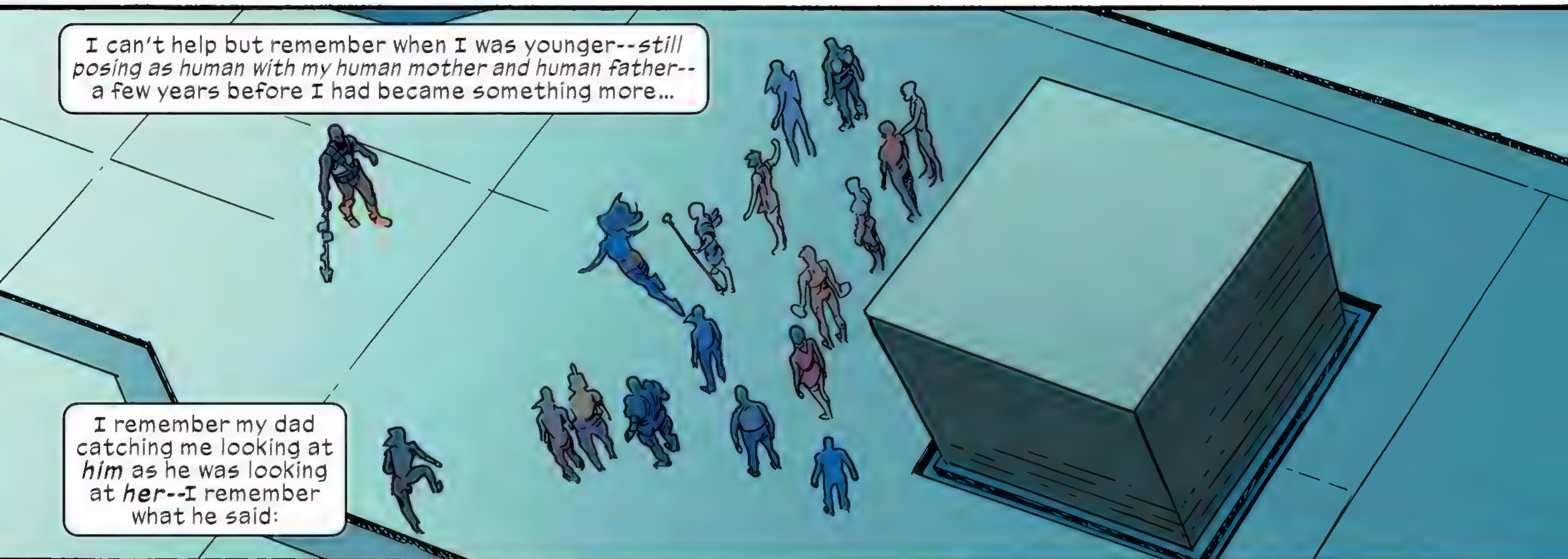
I had decades--
longer--alone with
my thoughts.

Survival and observation
could only fill so many
hours...or weeks...or years...



Living at the whim of
post-humanity stirred
memories of the past.

Looming death--*inevitable*
death--demanding an
audience with the ghosts
of my childhood.



I can't help but remember when I was younger--*still*
posing as human with my human mother and human father--
a few years before I had become something more...

I remember my dad
catching me looking at
him as he was looking
at *her*--I remember
what he said:



"Son, most people don't
know how to explain
it...but I sure do, *so*
listen closely..."



"Do you know the difference between caring for someone and loving them?"



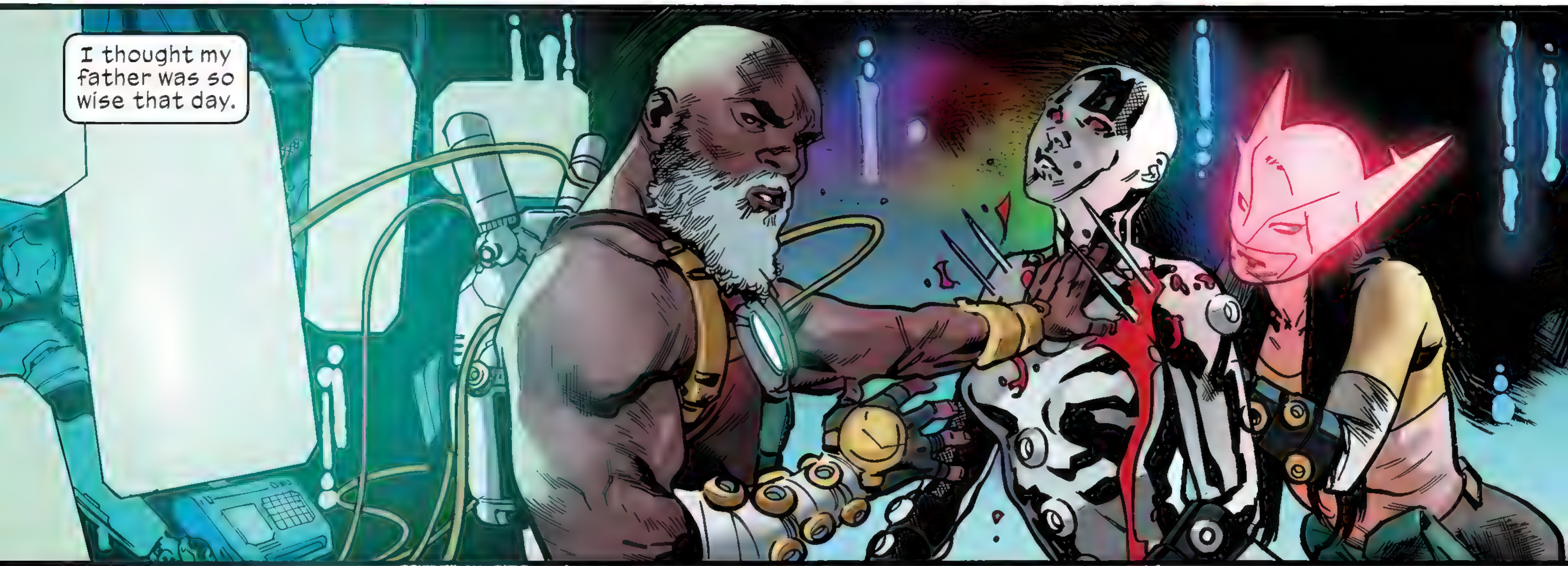
"If you *love* them...then you're willing to die for them."



"That's the difference."



"That's how you know it's real."



I thought my father was so wise that day.



There he is. Oh my god...

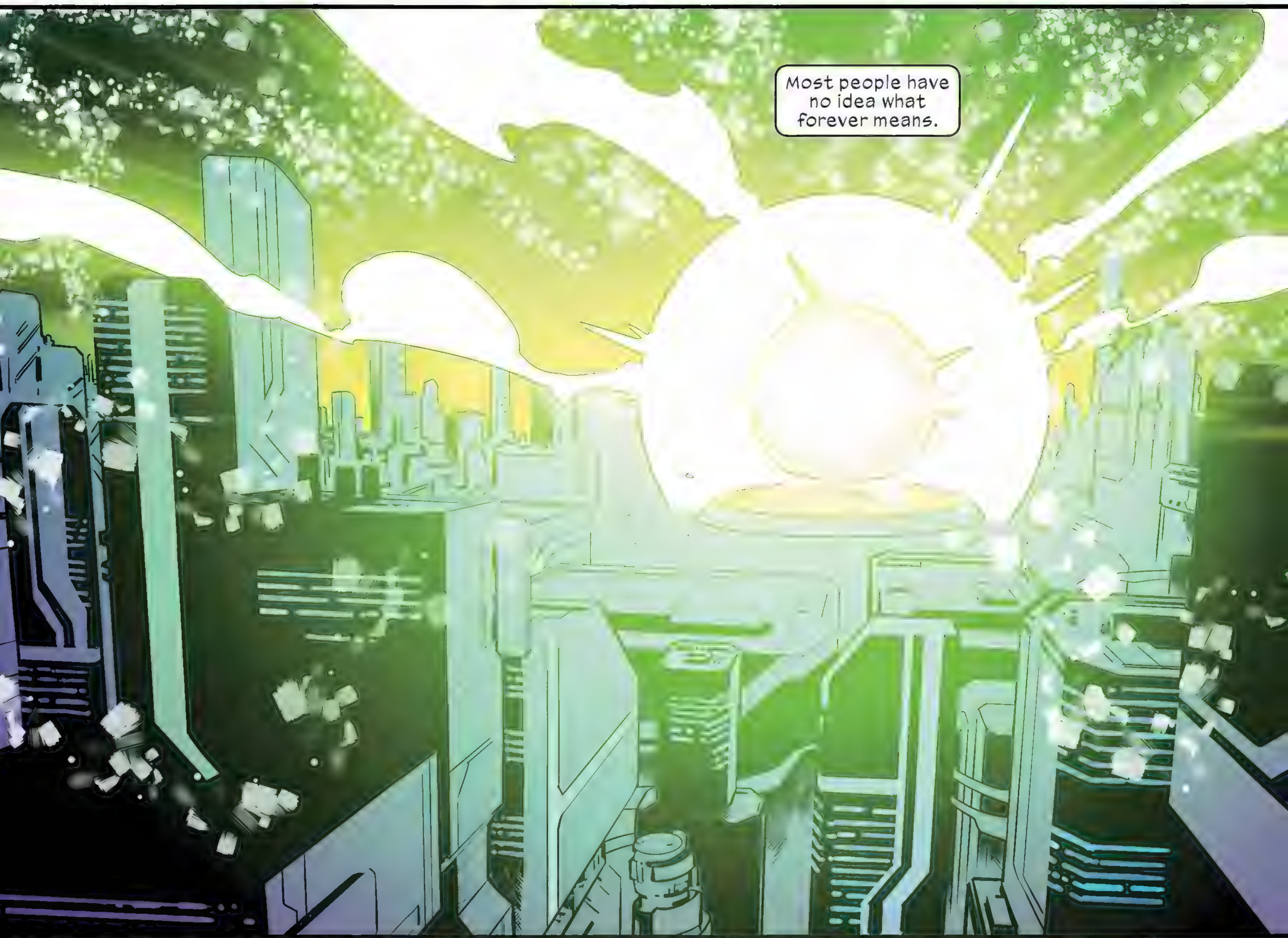
I think I know what this is...I think I know what they're doing to him...



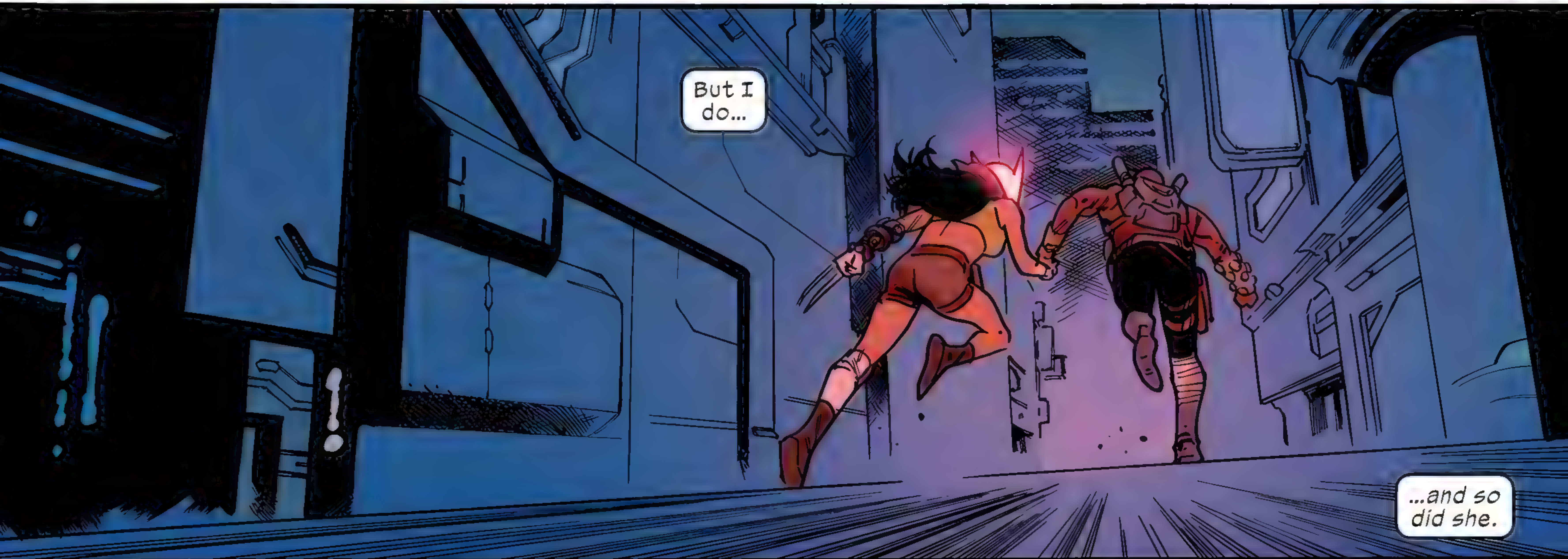
I thought I'd carry that truth with me forever.



Well, let me tell you something...



Most people have
no idea what
forever means.



But I
do...

...and so
did she.

[vau_{00}]
[lt_{00}]

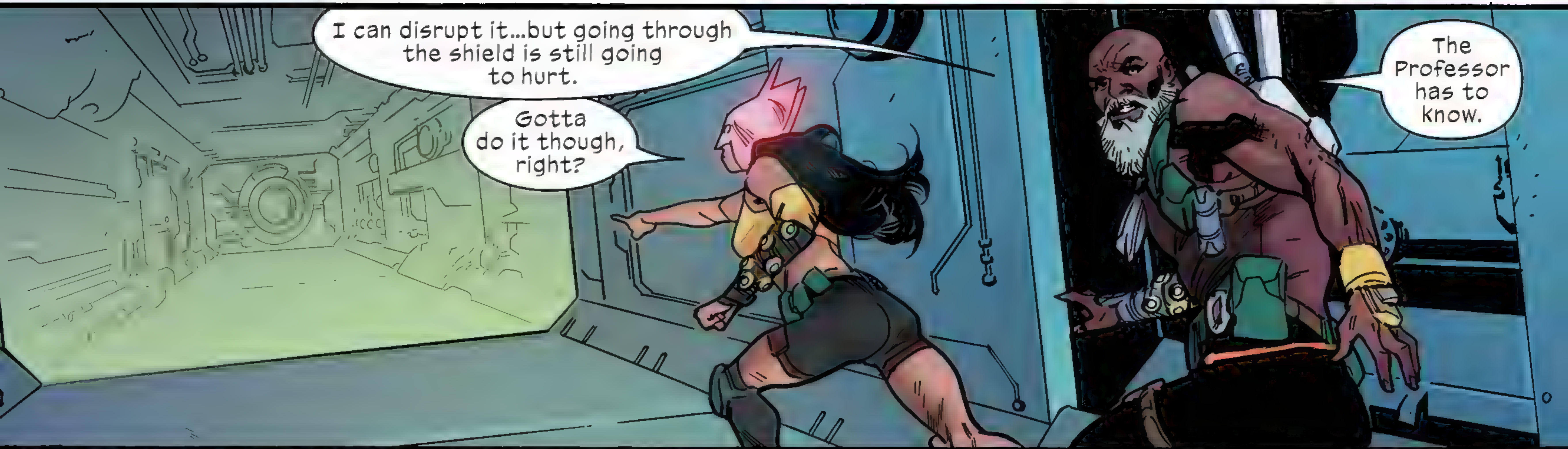
Location of Darwin discovered.

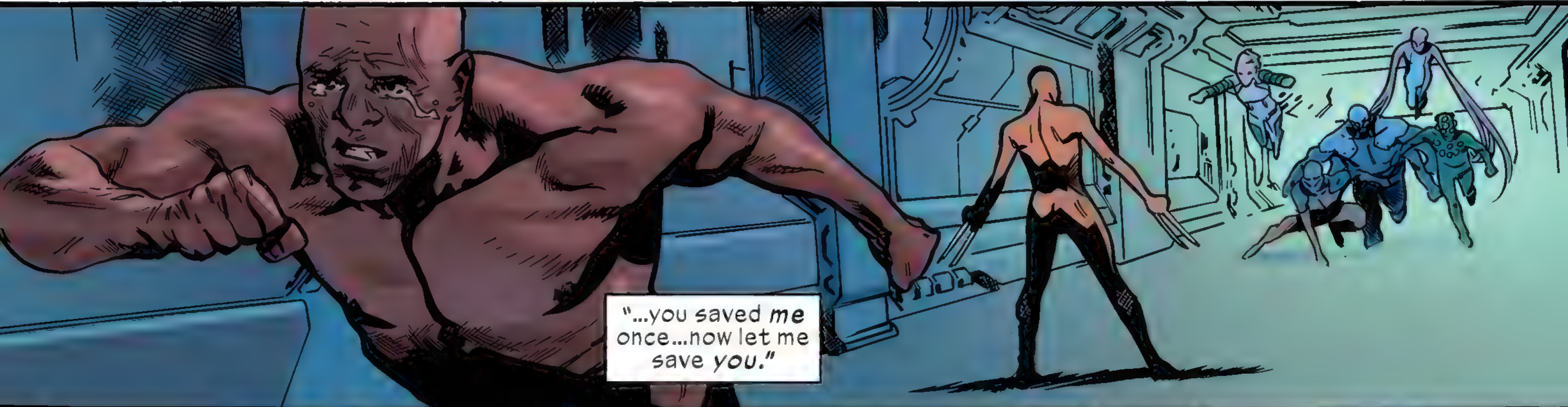
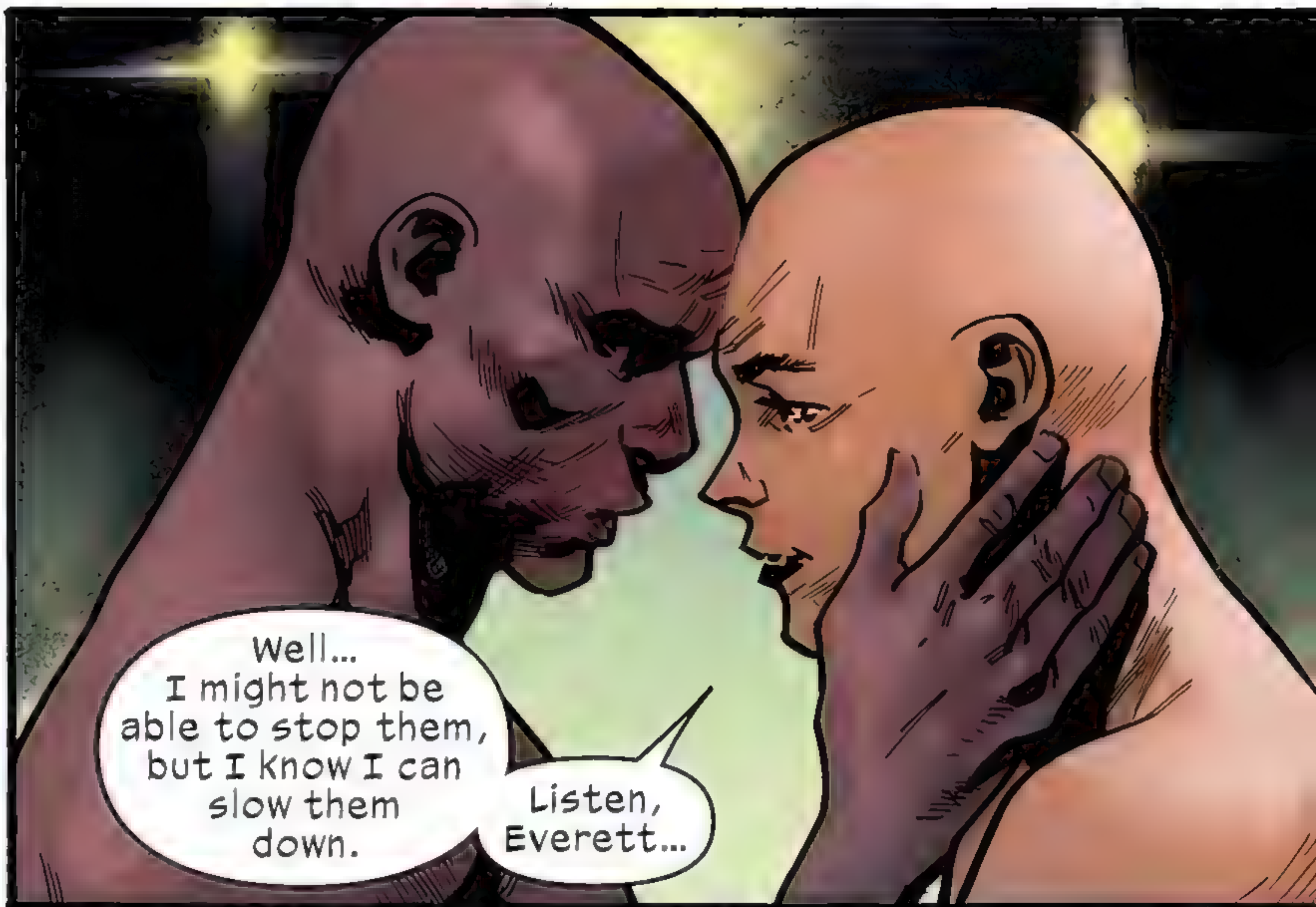
Revelations of the
Diamante / City
datacore alignment:

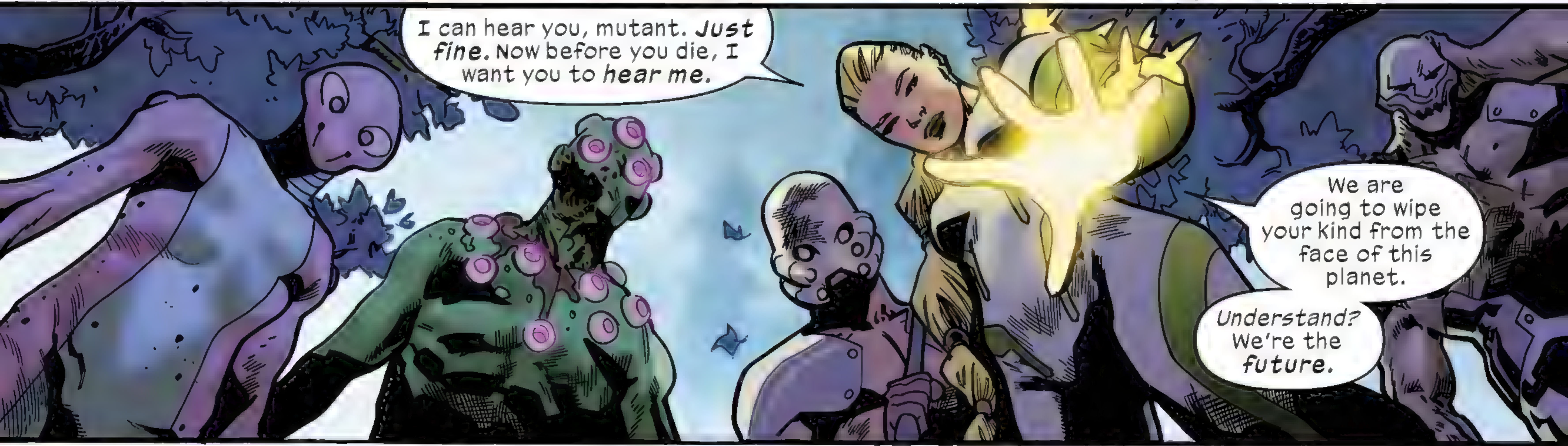
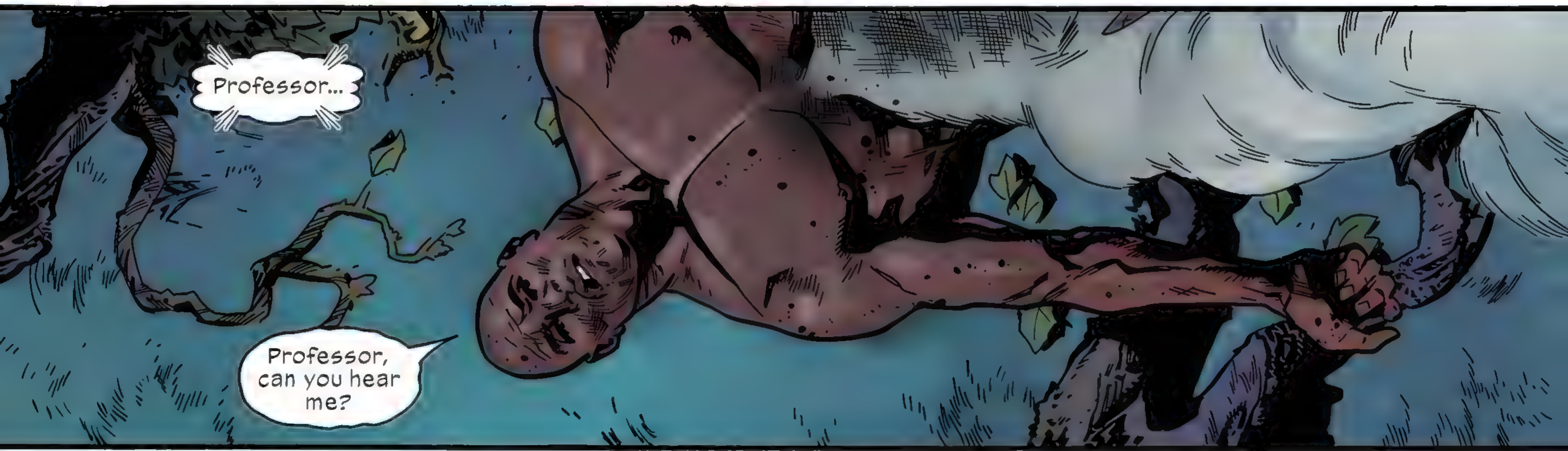
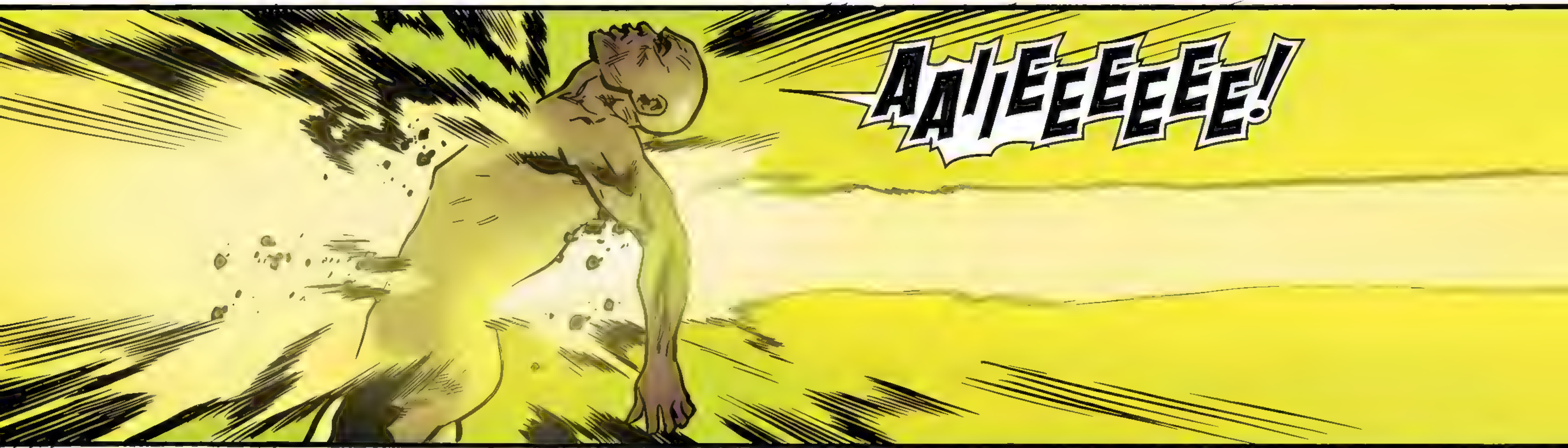
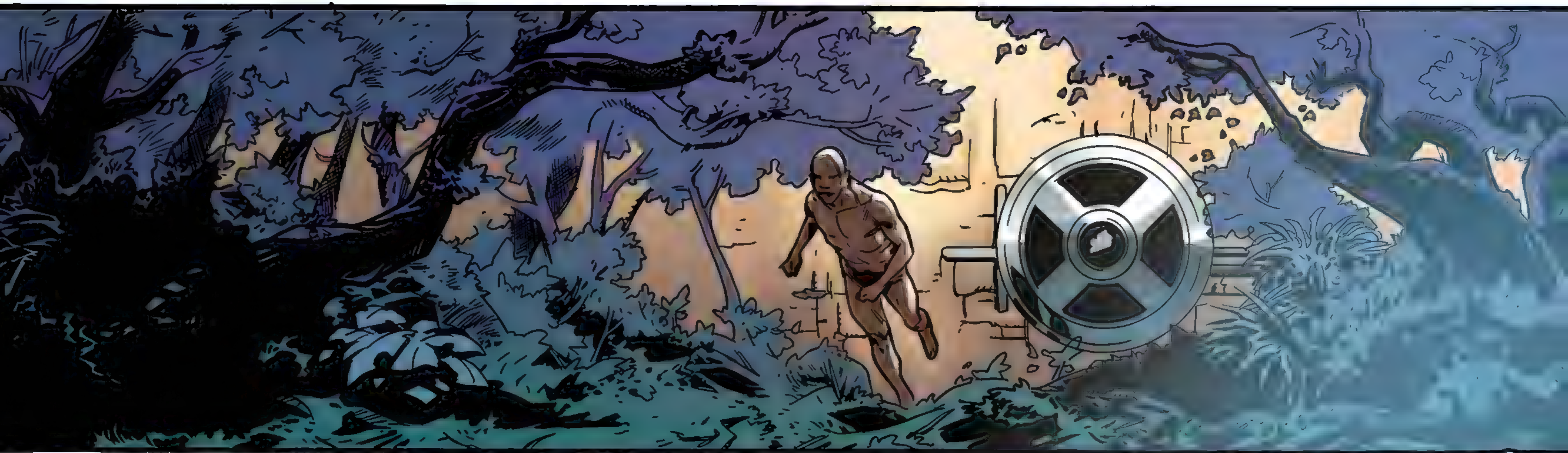
- Prior to Krakoa-era mutantdom, projections for mutant displacement required the creation of third-generation Children.
- Post-establishment of Krakoan-era mutantdom, third-generation Children no longer projected to be successful in displacement protocol.
- Fourth-generation Children required.
- Creation of fourth-generation Children beyond the current capabilities of the City.
- Examination of the mutant Darwin's acquired genetic material reveals highly adaptable evolutionary structure.
- Acquire the mutant Darwin.
- Subject Darwin atomization and reconfiguration loop count: 10,278.
- Genome integration achieved. Harmonic convergence possible.
- Subject Darwin final atomization and biomass seeding complete.
- Fourth-generation Children now possible.
- Begin Child evolution.

Mutant recon team attempts Vault escape using stasis DNA of Merbavon, a Child disruptor.

[vau_{00}]
[lt_{00}]







Not
you.

Now.

He was listening.

The professor heard me in time.

So I made it out.

I made it back.

Welcome home, Everett.

You were missed.

I was resurrected with all the secrets of the Vault. What they had become... what they were becoming...

...and some ideas of how to stop them.



But that's just
information...
data...

Here's what
I really
learned.



Friend, confidant, partner,
lover...those are *human*
words to describe a
human relationship
measured in *human years*.

I can still hear
him...my father
saying that he loved
my mother so much
he was willing to die
for her.



Human
words.

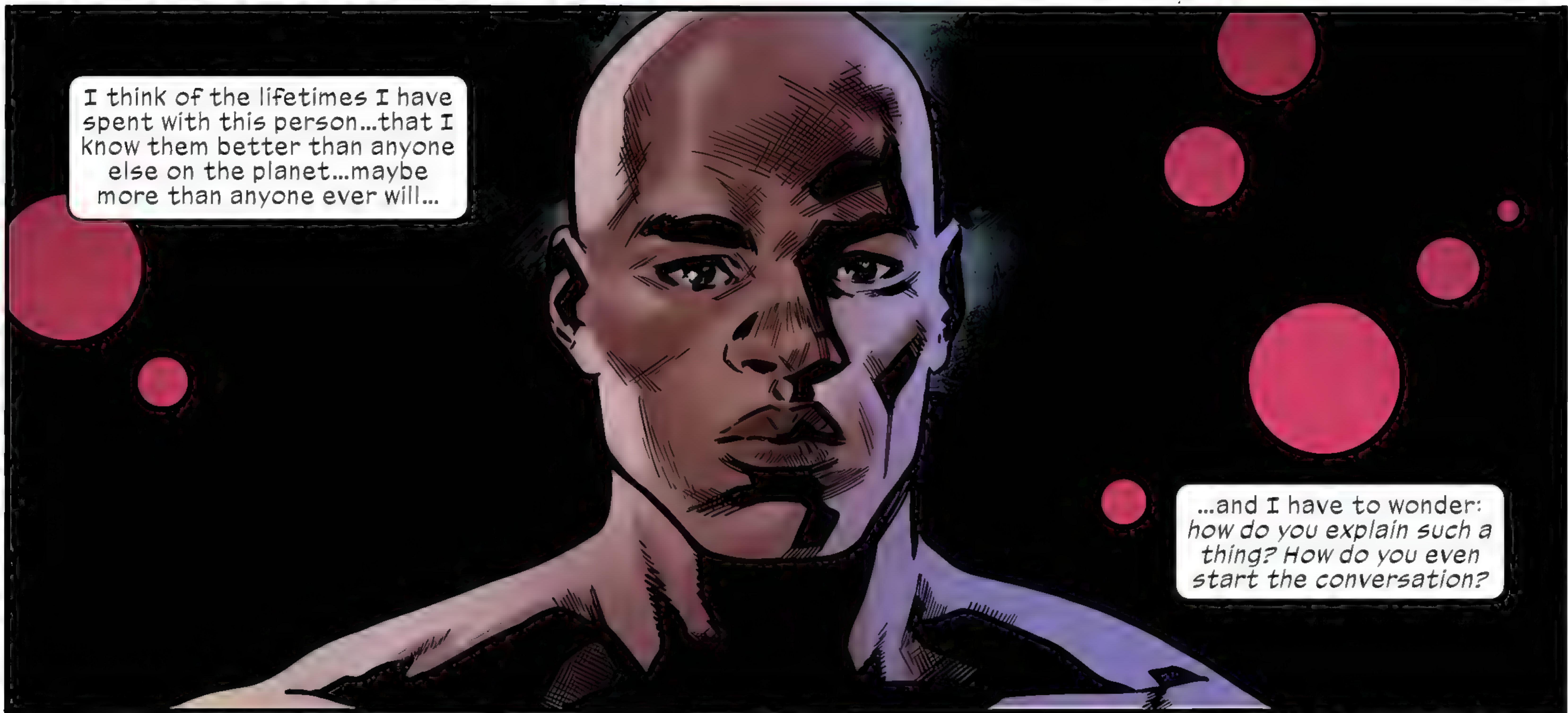
Useless
words.



Love is not
dying for
someone...



...it's
living for
them.

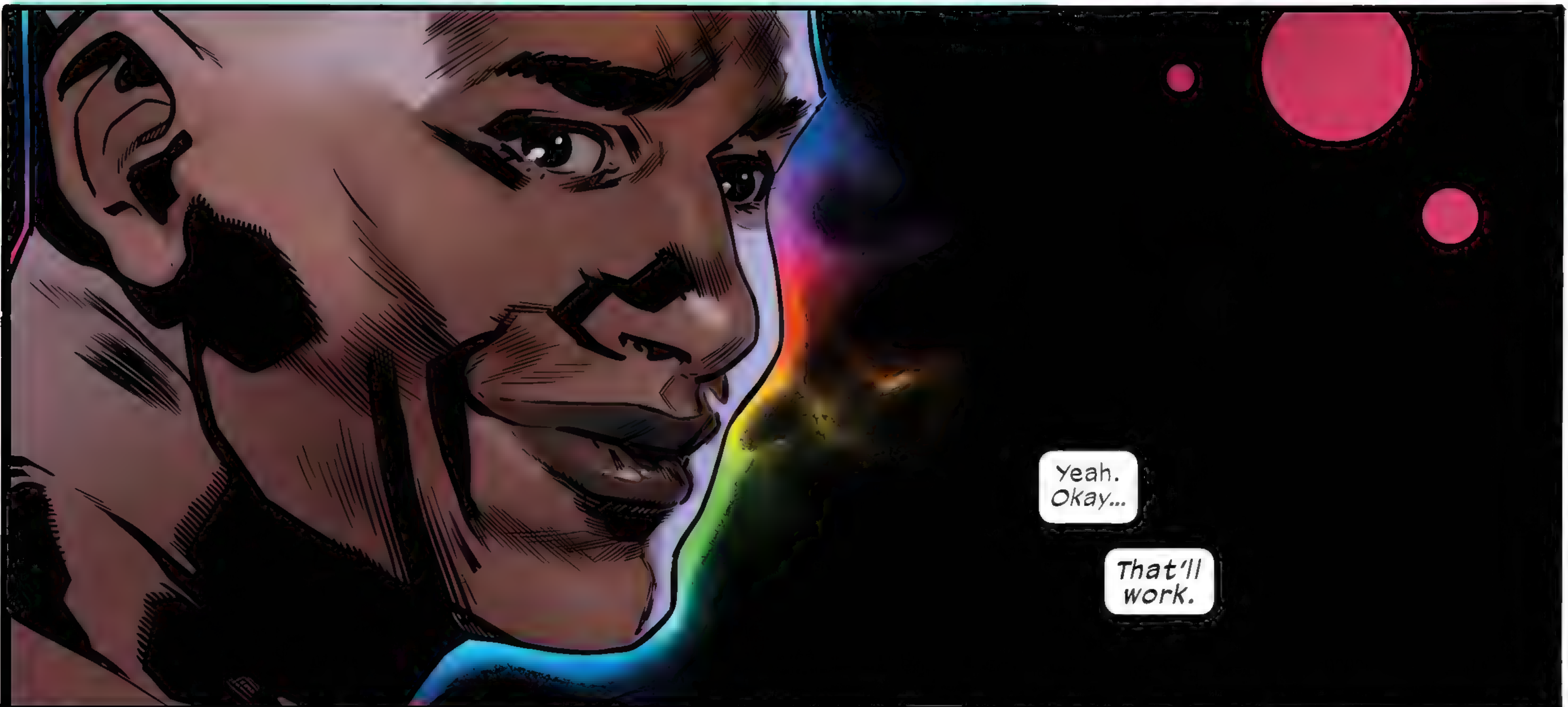


I think of the lifetimes I have spent with this person...that I know them better than anyone else on the planet...maybe more than anyone ever will...

...and I have to wonder: how do you explain such a thing? How do you even start the conversation?



What are you looking at?



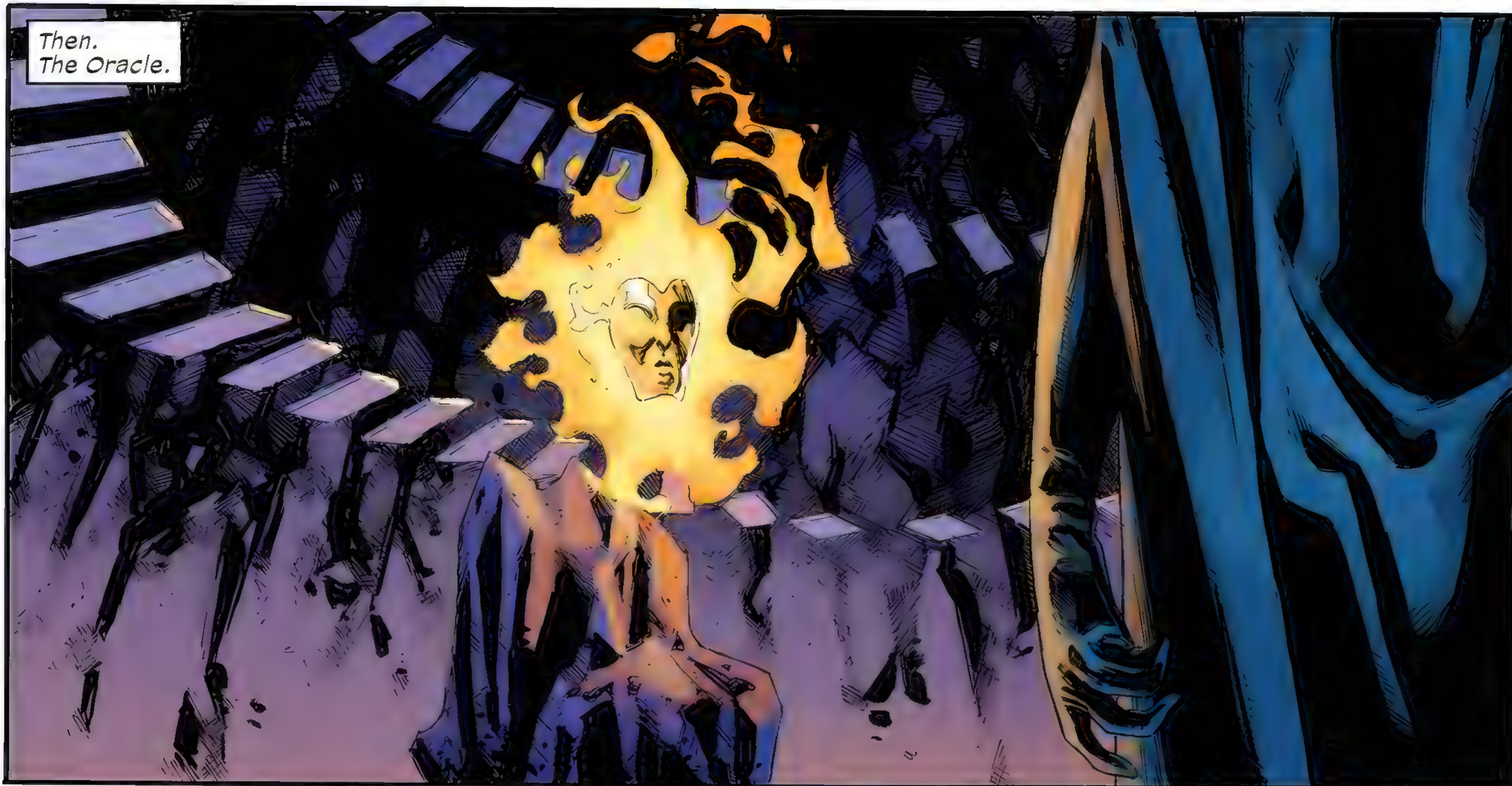
Yeah. Okay...

That'll work.



Lost Love

22



Then.
The Oracle.



"If I understand
you correctly..."



"...you're looking
to make a bit of
an impression."

Forge's Lab.

The problem is you tell that to a *creative person* like me, and, well, I can take it in *any number of ways*.

Because there's blowing stuff up...and then there's sowing razed earth with salt so as to never see life exist there again.

So...

...exactly how much of an *impression* are you looking to *make*, Raven?

I have... *annihilation on my mind*.

And when I look around *your lab*, I know I've come to the right *place*. But I can't help but wonder...

How do you sleep at night, surrounded by all of... *this*?

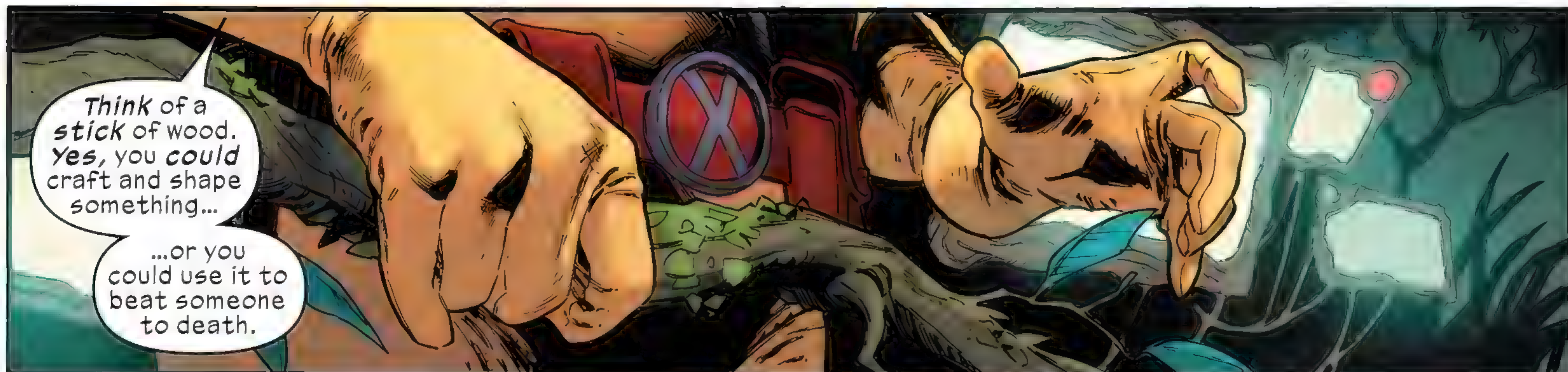


...
I sleep fine.



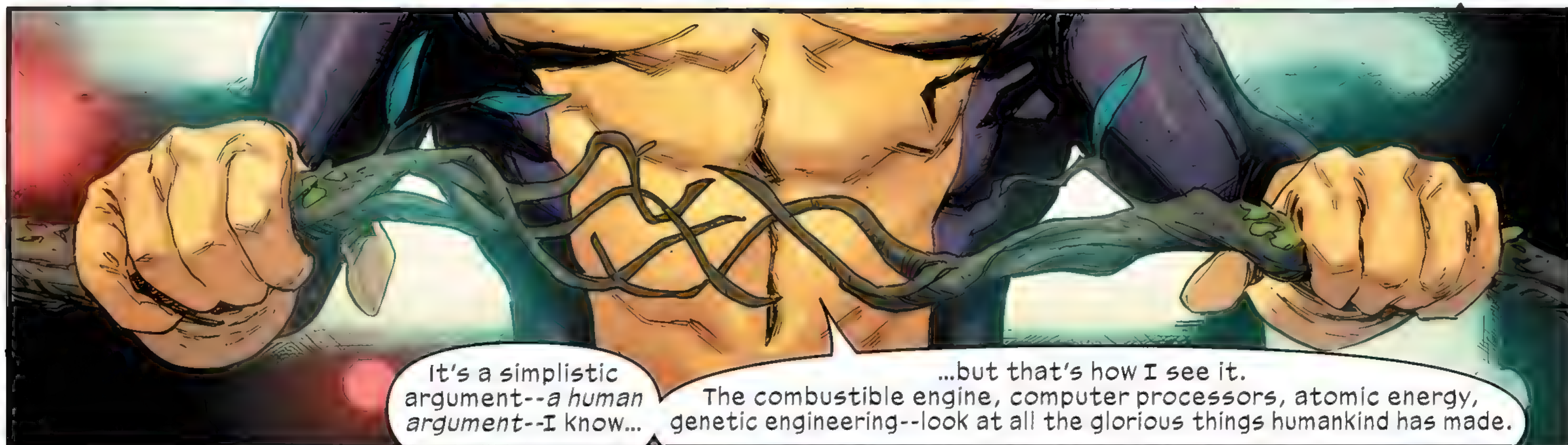
Well. That's no small feat.

And how do you manage *that*?



Think of a stick of wood. Yes, you could craft and shape something...

...or you could use it to beat someone to death.



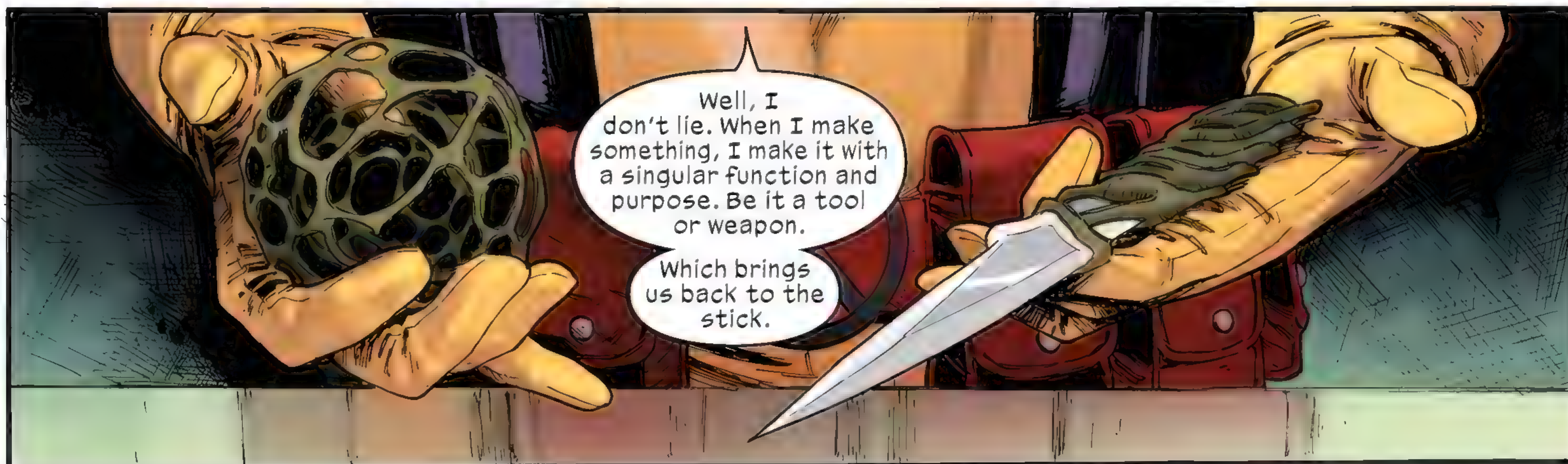
It's a simplistic argument--a human argument--I know...

...but that's how I see it. The combustible engine, computer processors, atomic energy, genetic engineering--look at all the glorious things humankind has made.



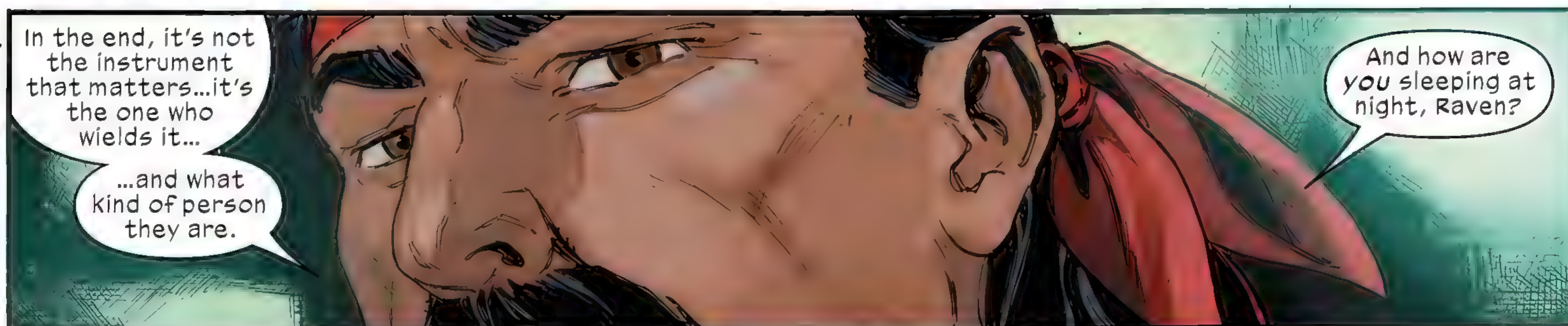
They take a useful tool, and then they find a way to use it for destruction--theirs and ours. That's what they do.

It's the lie they tell themselves. "We started with such good intentions."



Well, I don't lie. When I make something, I make it with a singular function and purpose. Be it a tool or weapon.

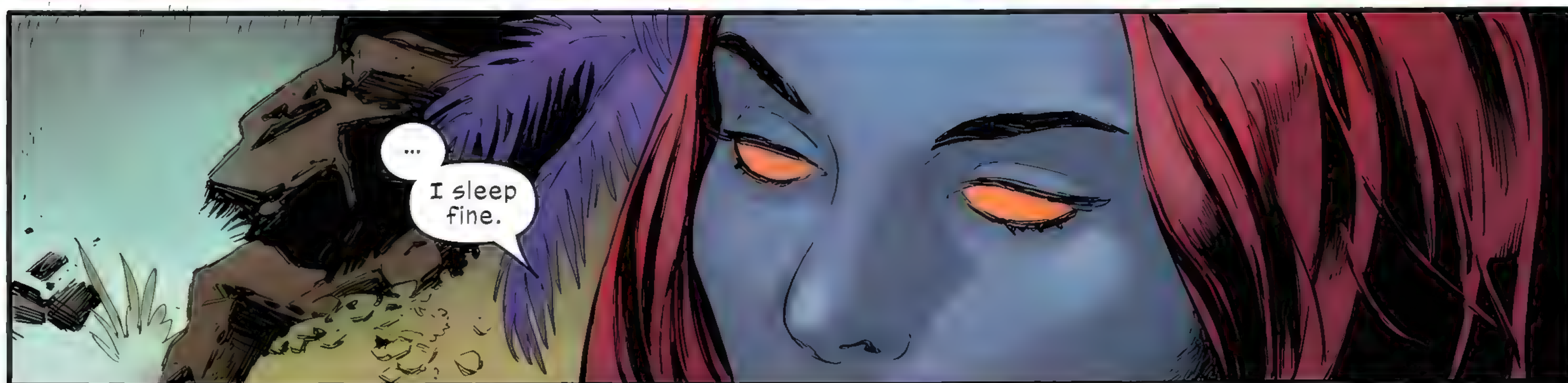
Which brings us back to the stick.



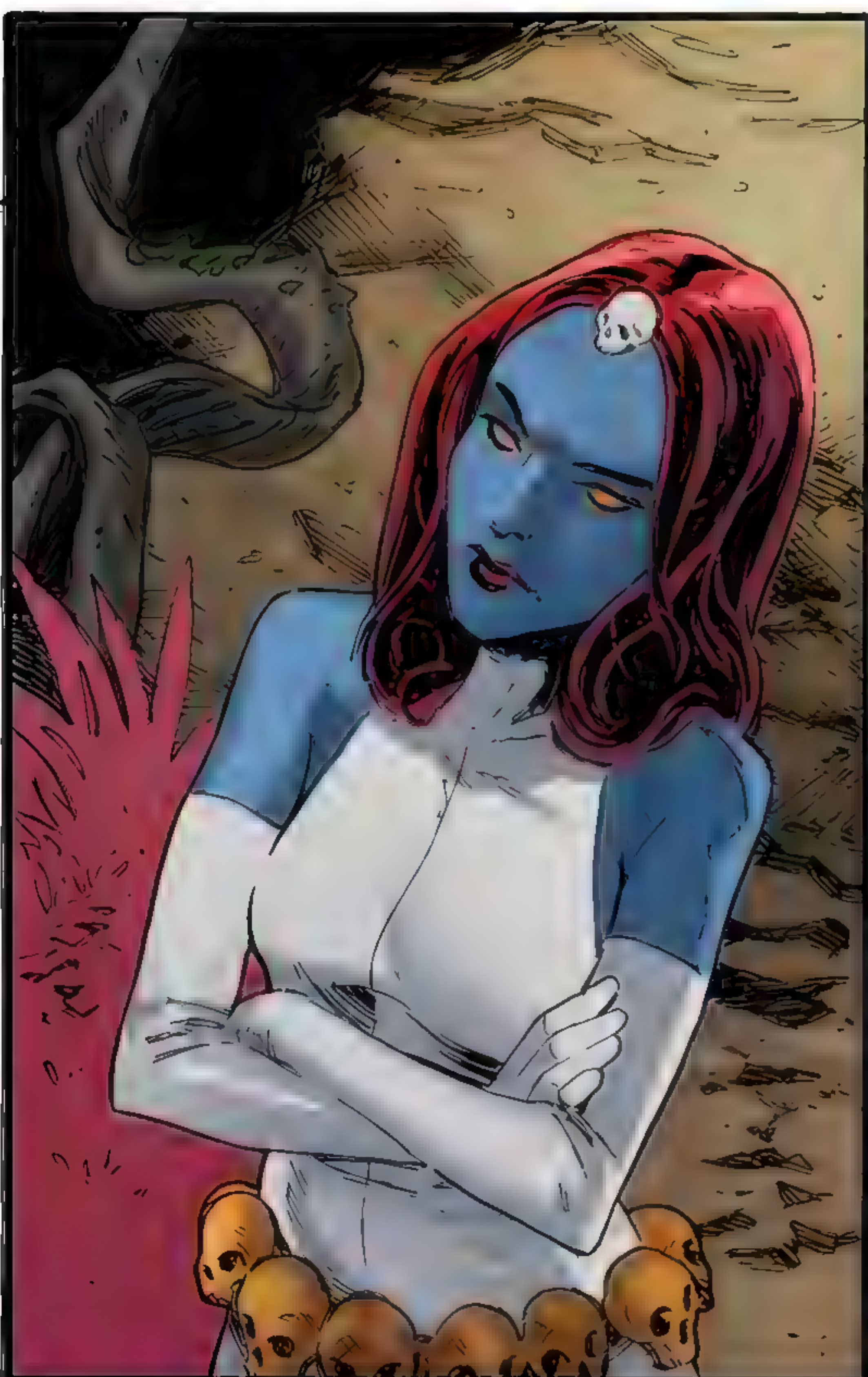
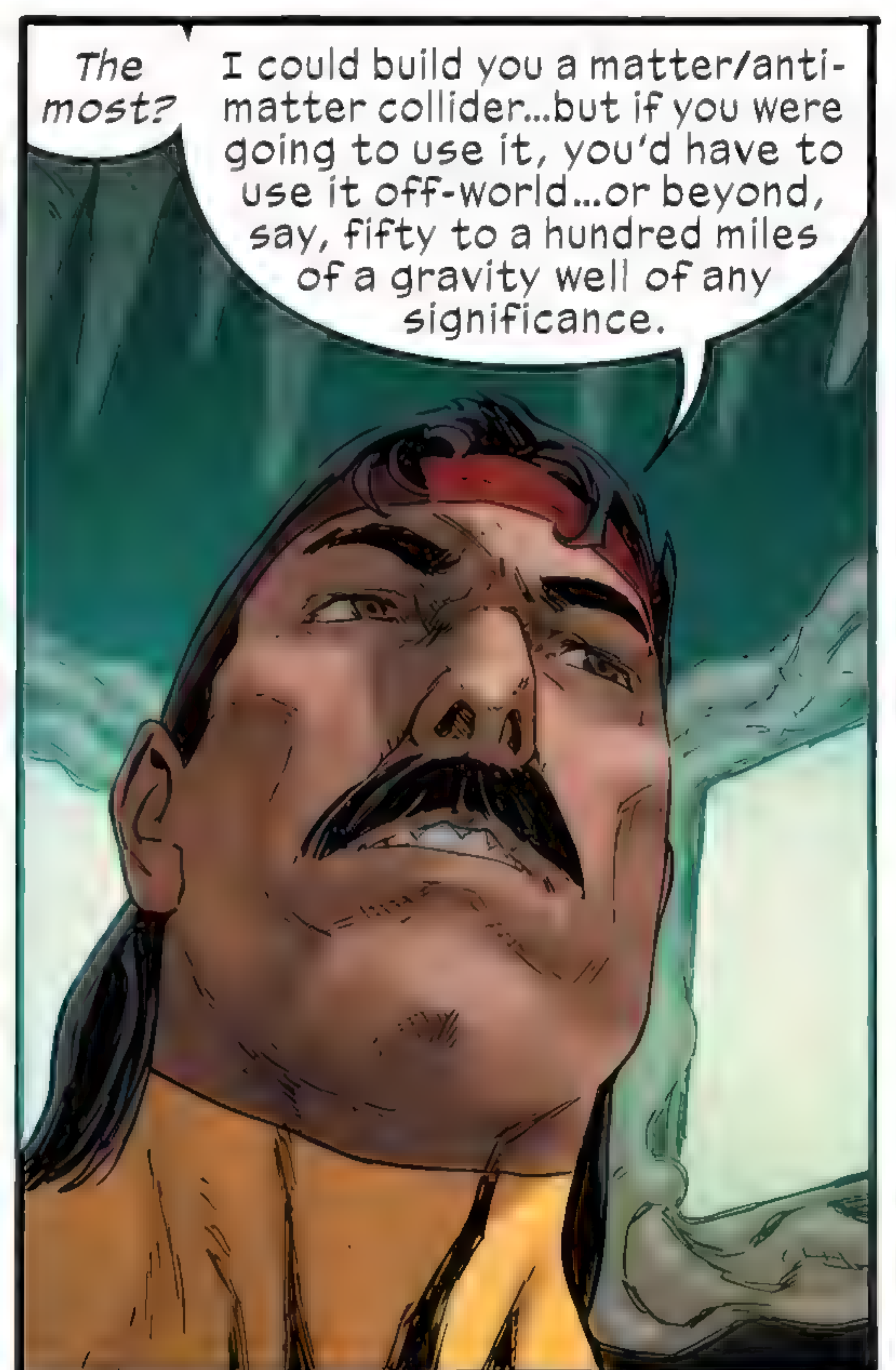
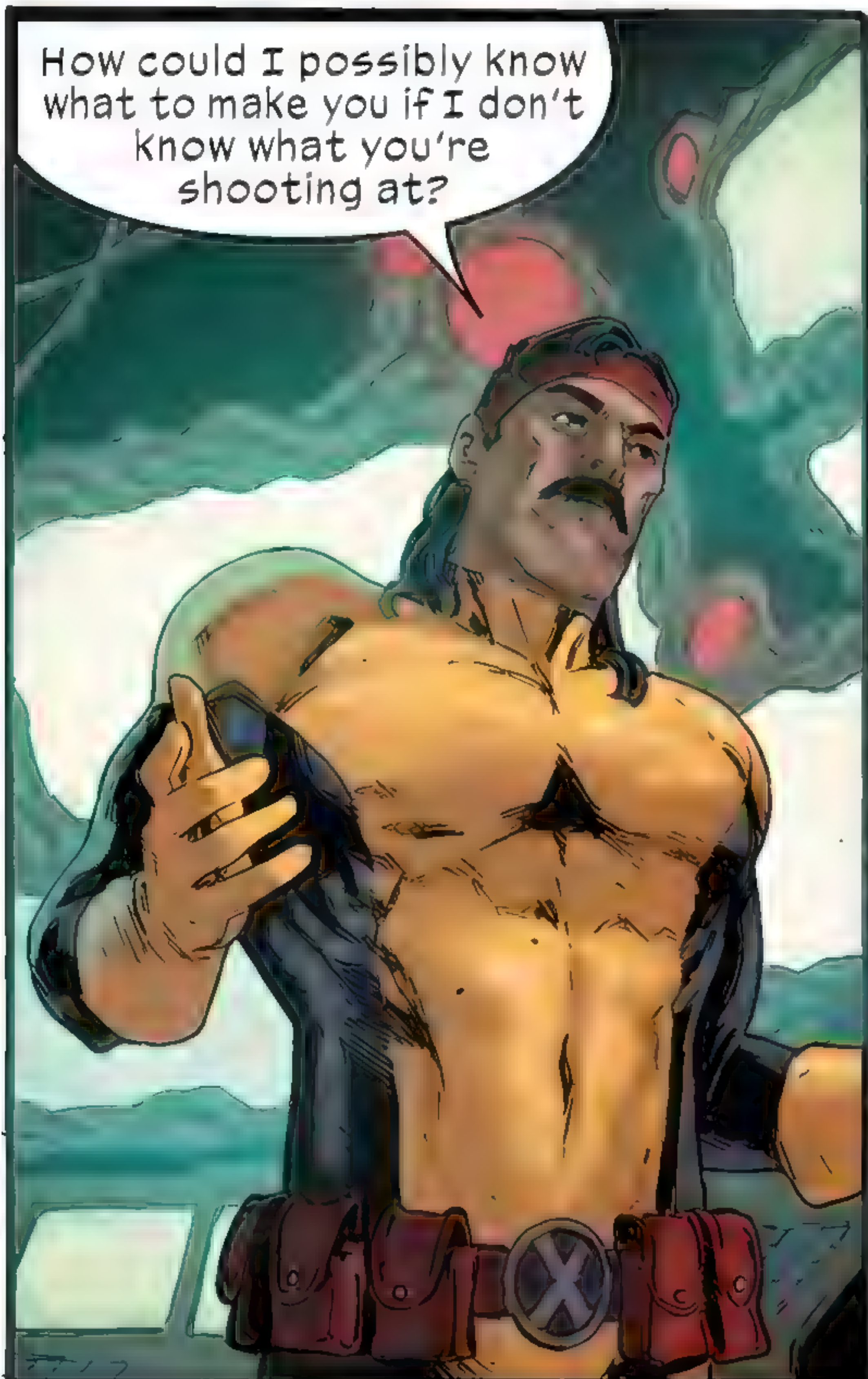
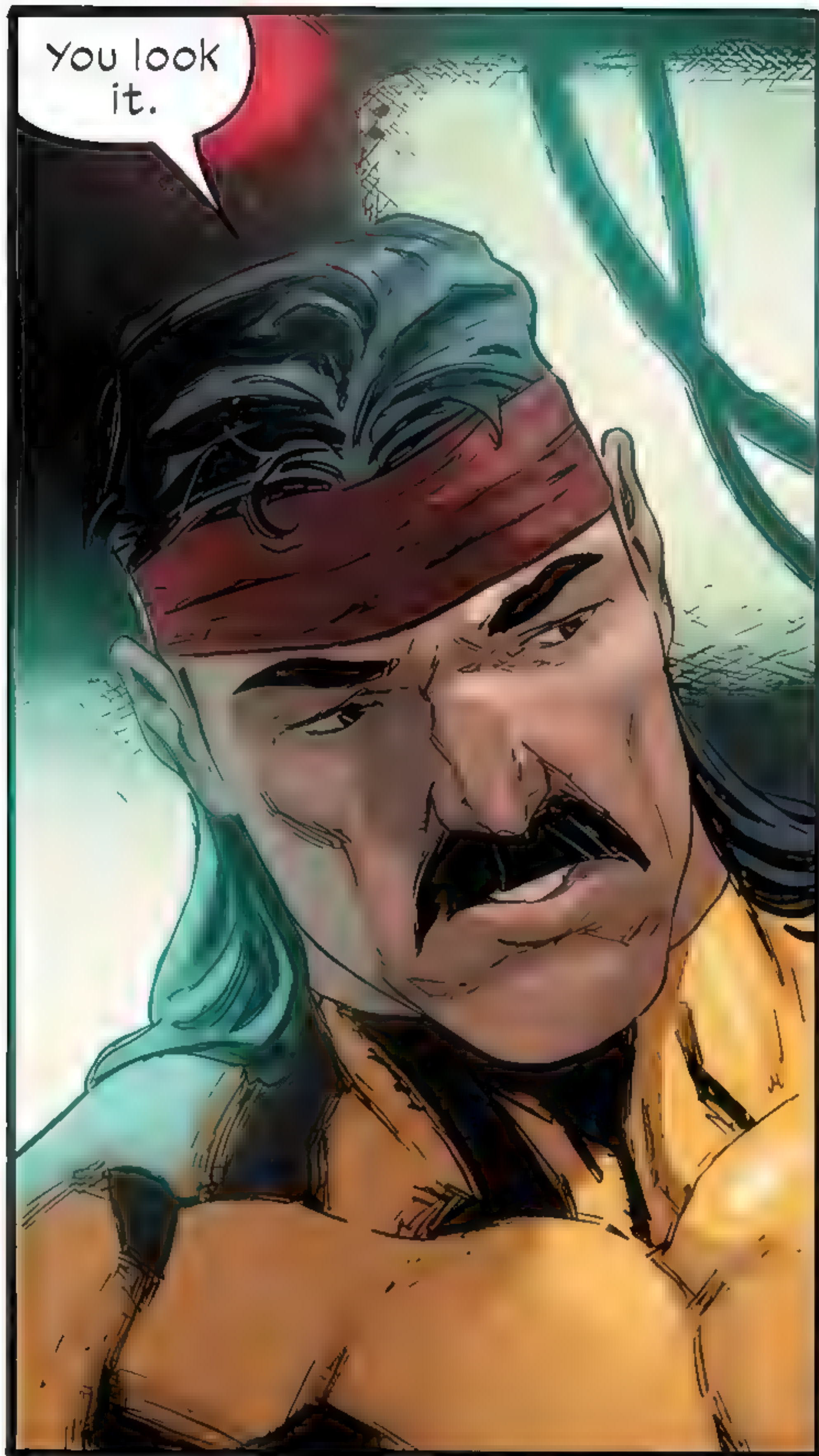
In the end, it's not the instrument that matters...it's the one who wields it...

...and what kind of person they are.

And how are you sleeping at night, Raven?



...
I sleep fine.





Now.
The House of M.

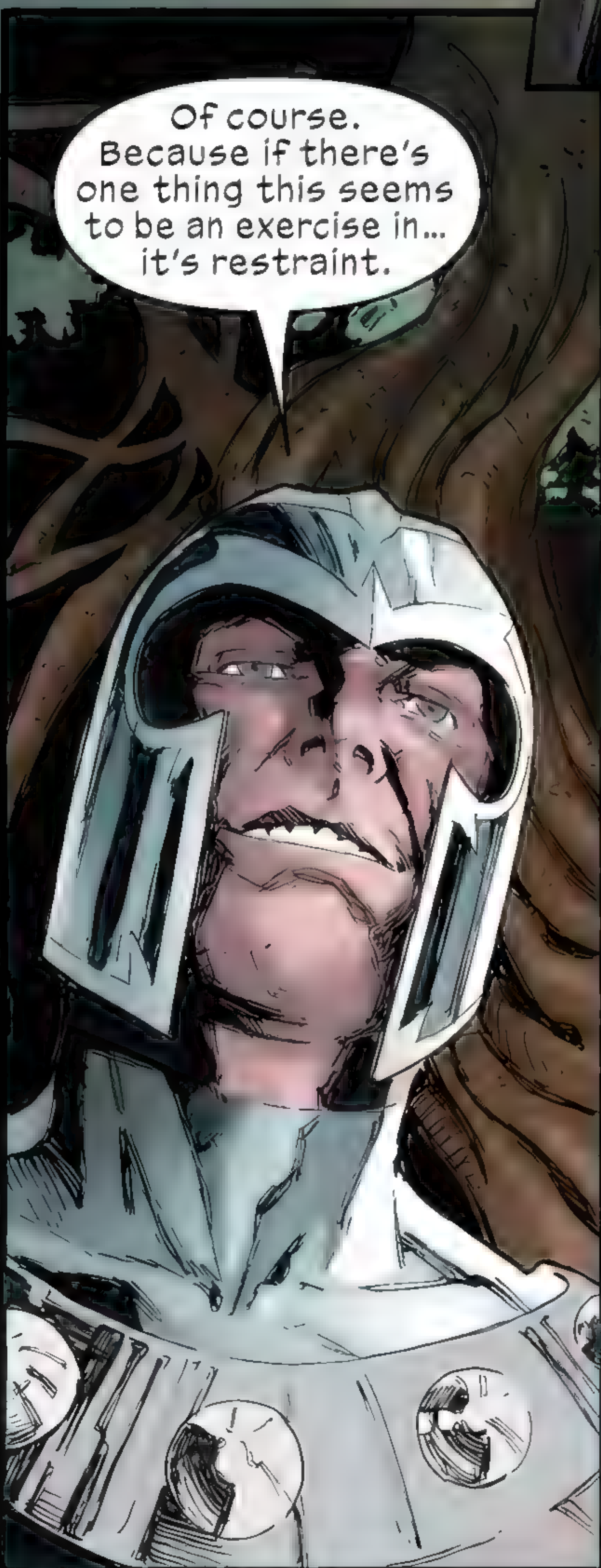
"What
is it?"

He calls it
a microscopic
singularity
generator.

Apparently,
when it goes off,
it'll release a miniature
black hole that will
exist for a fractional
amount of time before
collapsing in
on itself.

It will
eat the Orchis
Forge, but it won't
be big or strong enough
to reach Sentinel City
or their system of
orbital platforms.

Forge
said we'd
be risking
the Sun with
something
larger.



Of course.
Because if there's
one thing this seems
to be an exercise in...
it's restraint.



This isn't some kind of *selective surgery*--it's *cancer*.

Cut it out,
at the root. Treating
it some other way does
no one any good.

Leave
no doubt.
That's what you
want here,
isn't it?



It's possible that up to this point, we've
overmanaged the job. As you're the one
executing it, perhaps we should leave
the details of the mission
up to you.

In the end,
the only thing that
matters is preventing
Nimrod from coming
online.



So when the slaughter starts...you want your *hands* clean.

Such leadership.



... This isn't servitude, Raven. We made a deal.

Any time you wish to end it, you can simply let us know that you're not the right tool for the job.



We have among us other monsters...

Some who do not lie to themselves about what they are.



When I return successful...

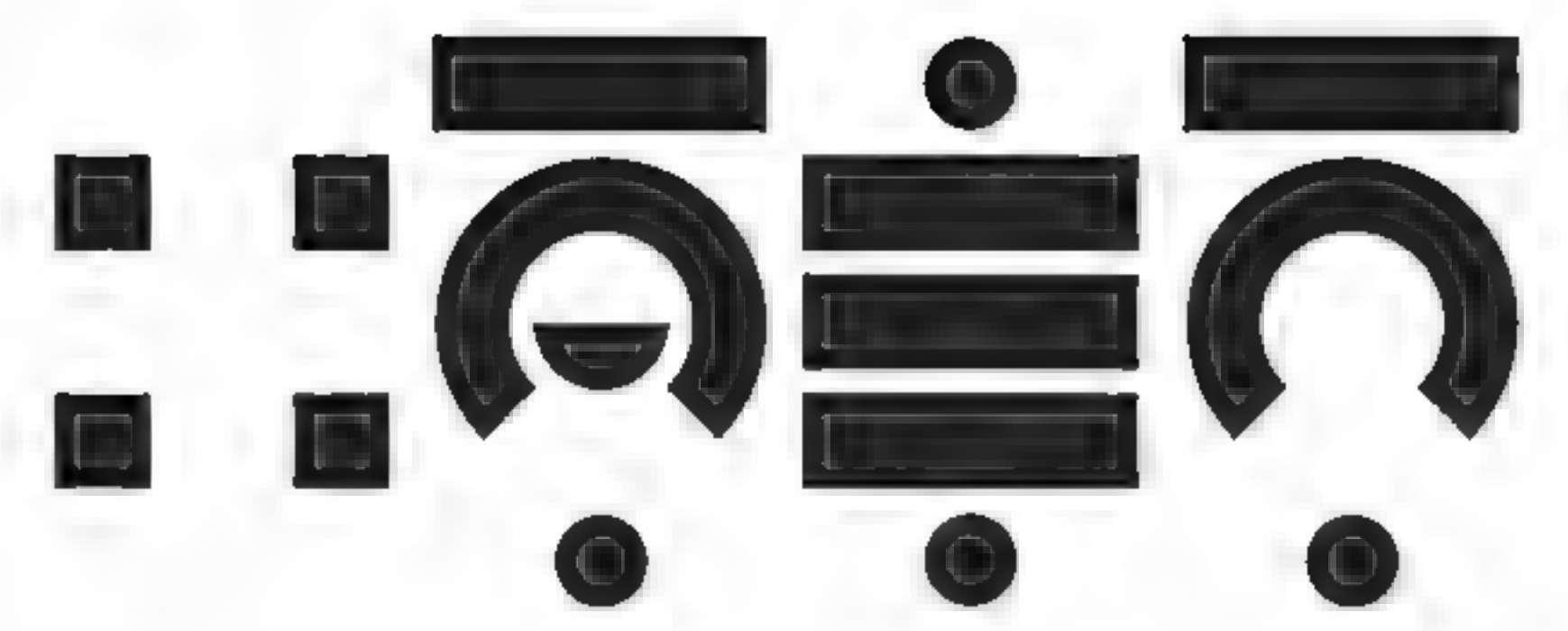
...you will have my wife moved to the front of the resurrection queue?



Of course.

Like Erik said, we made a deal.

Only your failure prevents its completion.



A TILTING WITHIN

The X-MEN undertook a mission to destroy the Orchis Forge, a space station with the capacity to create Nimrod, a highly advanced mutant-killing robot. They appeared to succeed, but a secret undertaking by Mystique -- assigned to her by Professor X and Magneto -- uncovered that the mission had not, in fact, stopped Orchis' Dr. Alia Gregor from 'beginning to develop' Nimrod.

While Mystique held up her end of the agreement, Professor X and Magneto did not, refusing to resurrect Mystique's wife, Destiny. And Mystique... will not be denied.



Mystique



Professor X



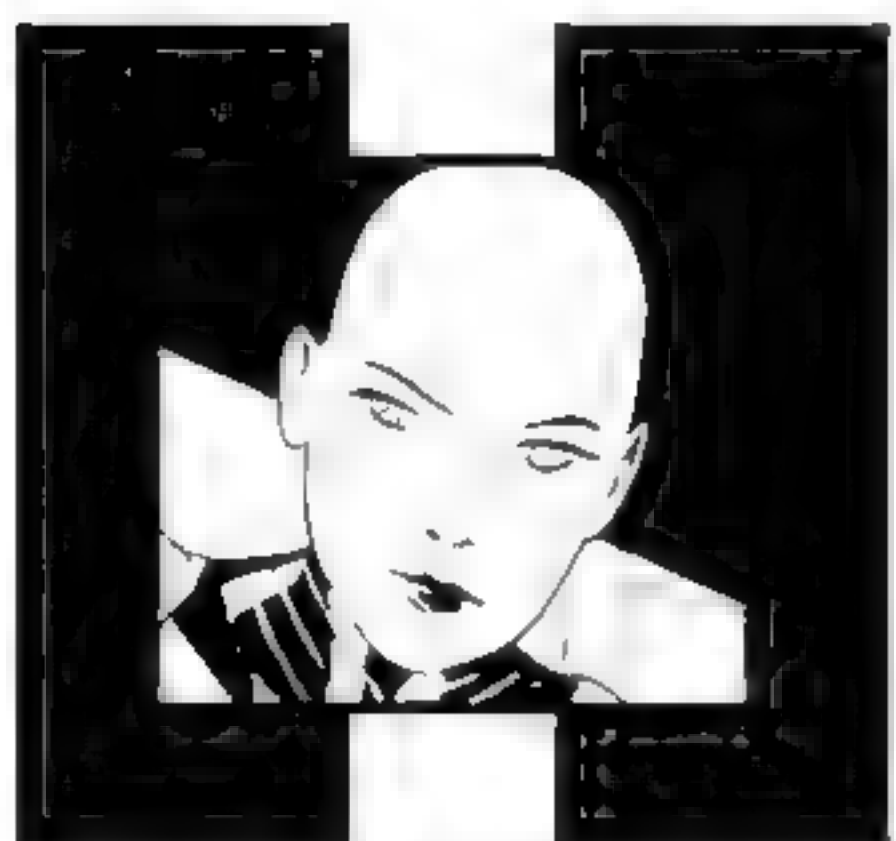
Forge



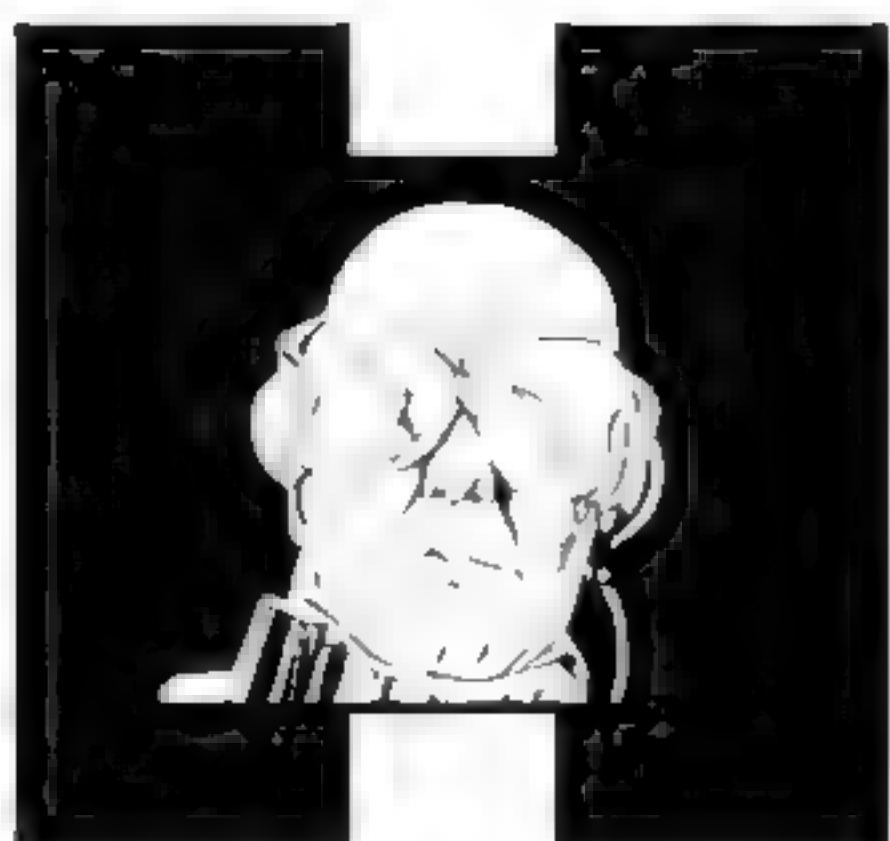
Magneto



Dr. Gregor



Omega
Sentinel



Dr. Devo

The Orchis Forge.

Here it is.

And even if it's untoward to say so myself, I have accomplished *something wonderful* here.

This is a *human* life.

My husband's, in fact.

Before he died saving this station, Erasmus was the subject of a very special experiment.

The idea behind it was that by using holographic memories grown in a crystalline shell, I could properly restore the essence--the extrapolation of the saved data--back into a human being. Of sorts.



The container--which I have just completed construction of--would have to be of the same material to start with. Self-healing and replicating, to keep up with the violent rebirth of man...

...but alive and returned from the abyss, nonetheless.



So we have gathered here to witness the resurrection of my husband.

If successful, the greatest achievement of my life...a scientific marvel.



"And yet, my only concern...is love."

"Come back to me, Erasmus."

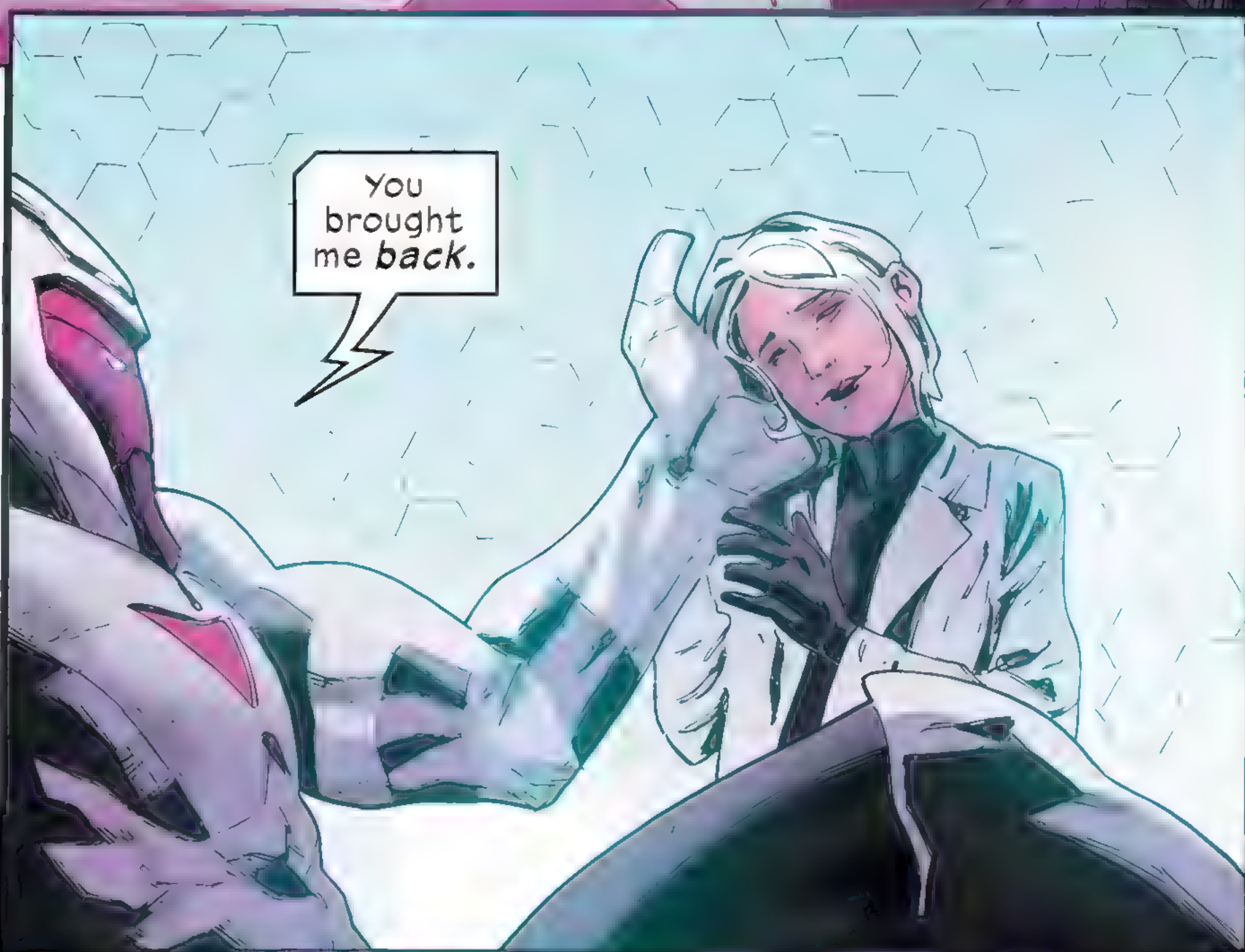
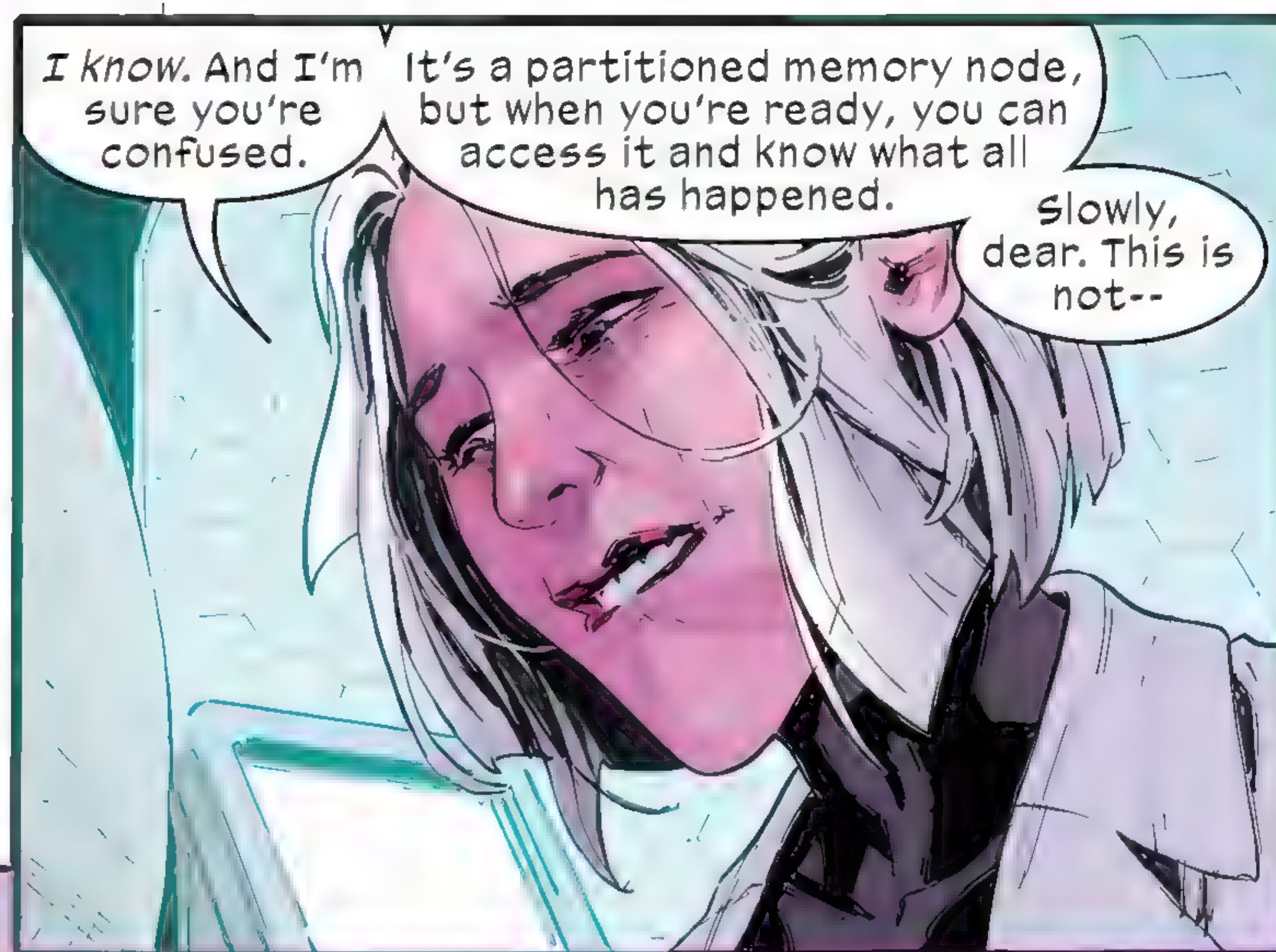
"Come back."



...



... Alia?



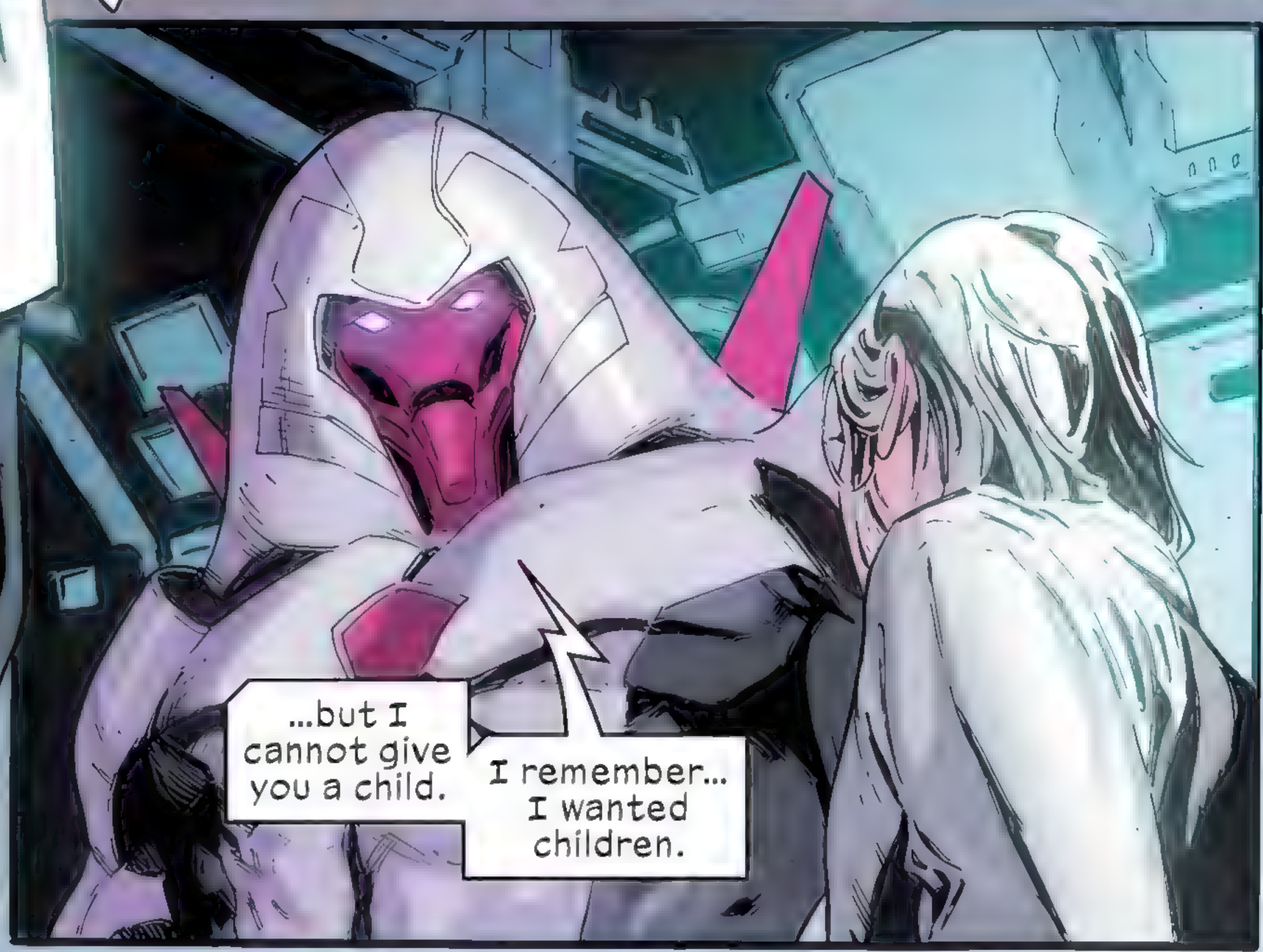


Yes. You're back. But not flesh and blood.

In a form where they can never hurt you again.

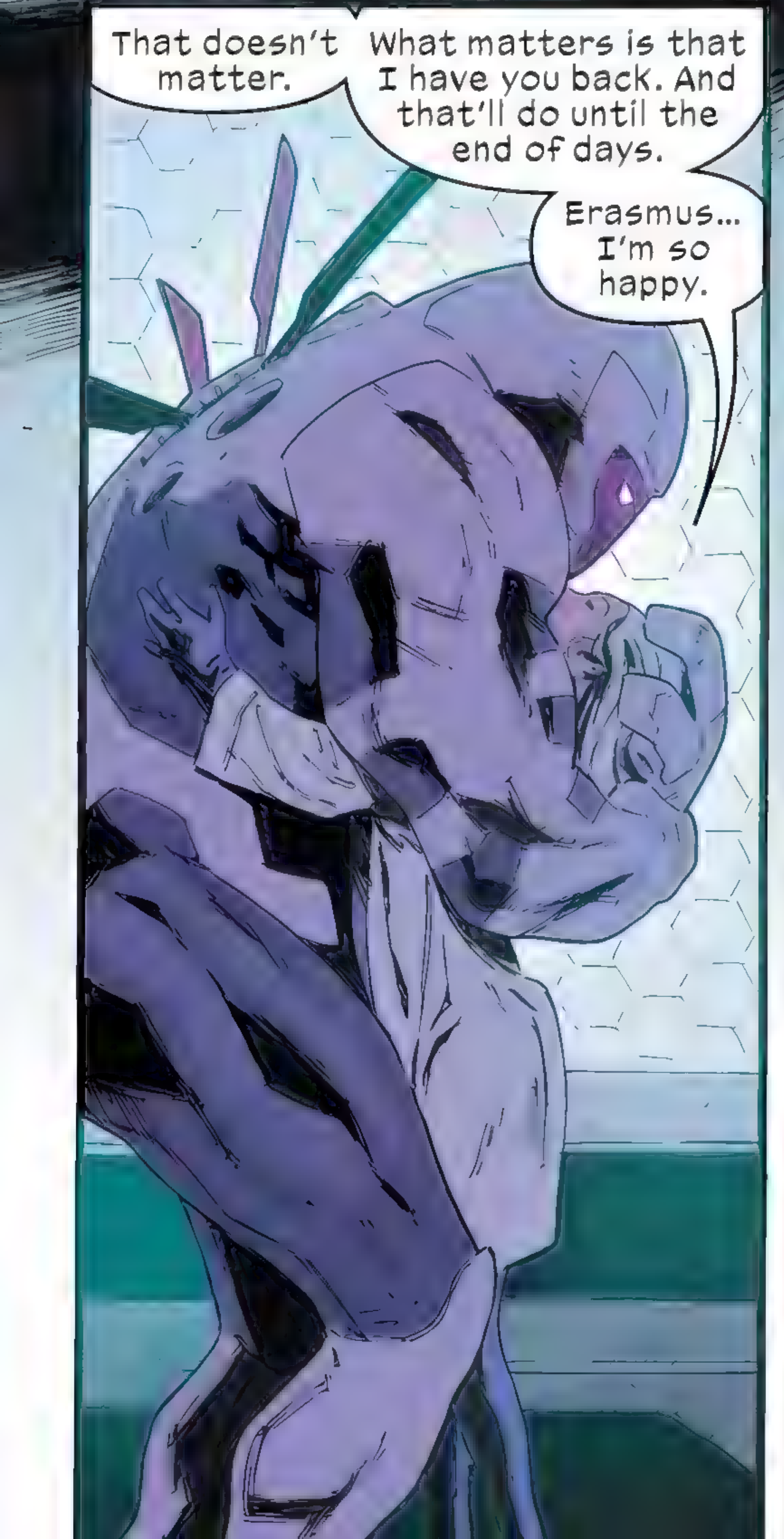
This body is... a wonder. I'm analyzing its capabilities and the things I will be able to do.

Duplication. Energy absorption. Weapon systems. Tactical databases... I am more than I was...but...



...but I cannot give you a child.

I remember... I wanted children.



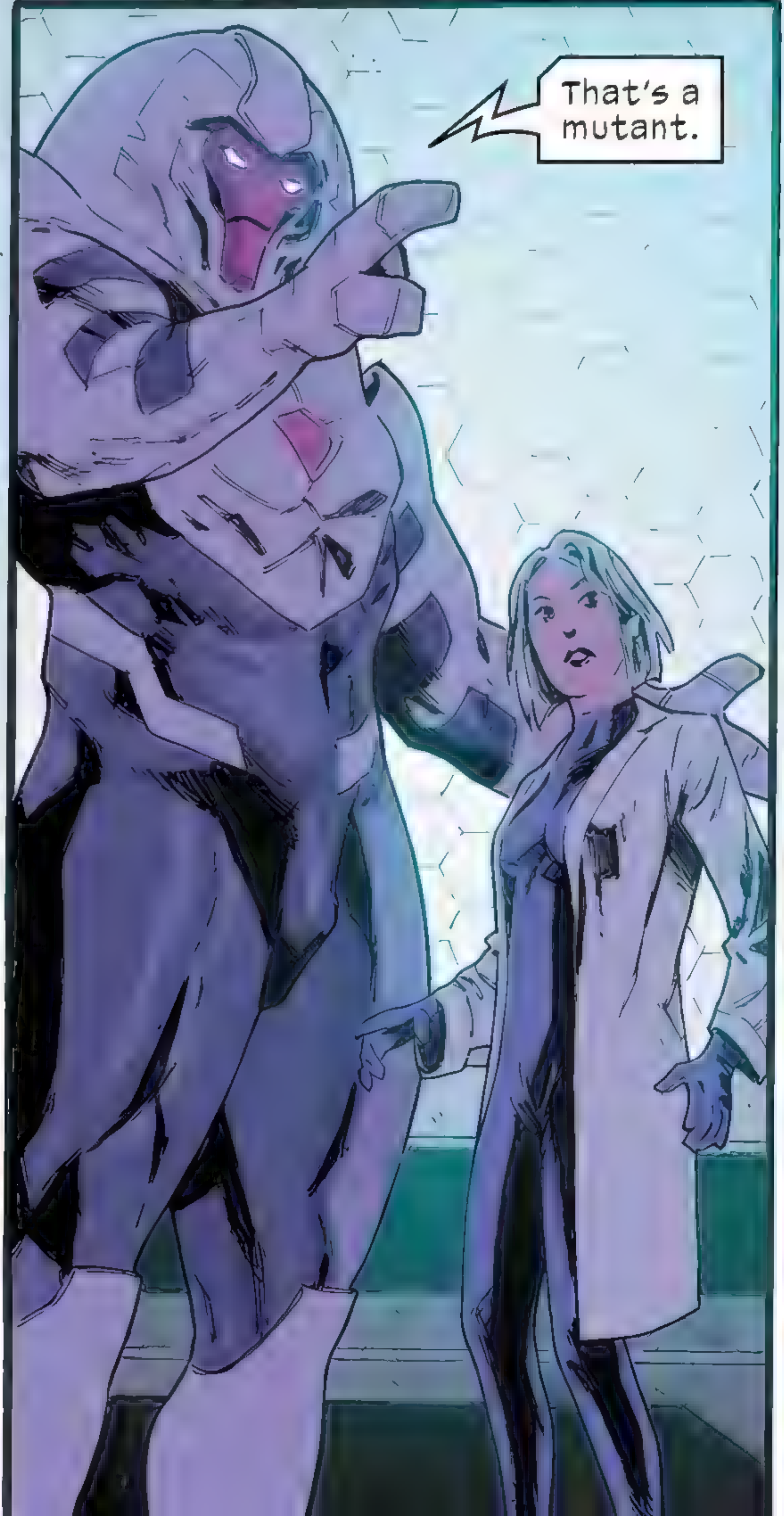
That doesn't matter.

What matters is that I have you back. And that'll do until the end of days.

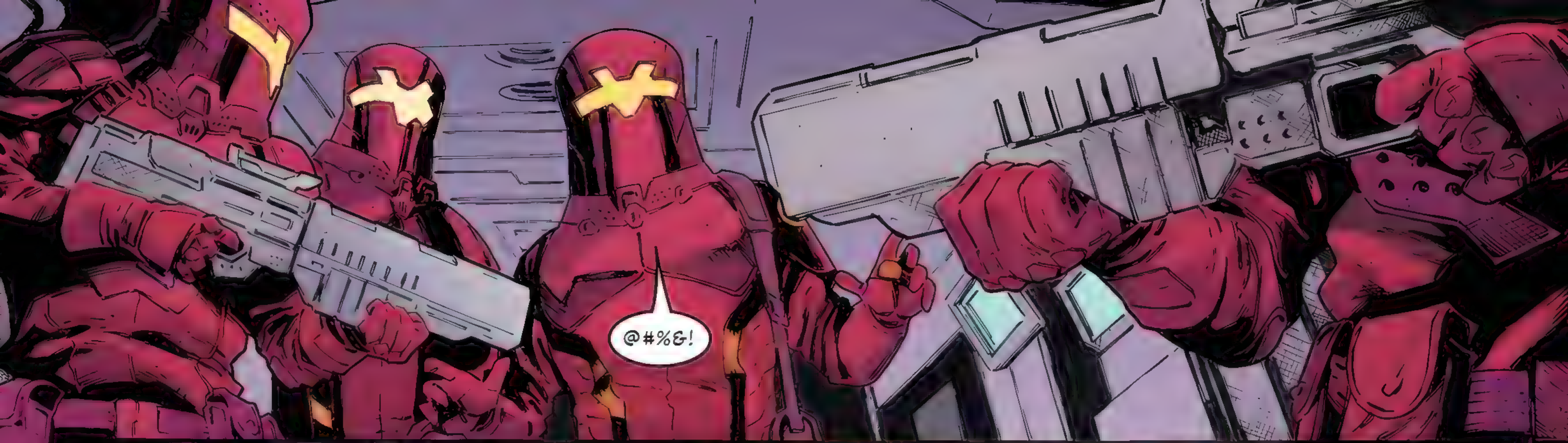
Erasmus... I'm so happy.



As am I, Alia. As am--



That's a mutant.



@#%&!



Move away from that person.



Don't bother... I'll move myself.

ZZZAKKK

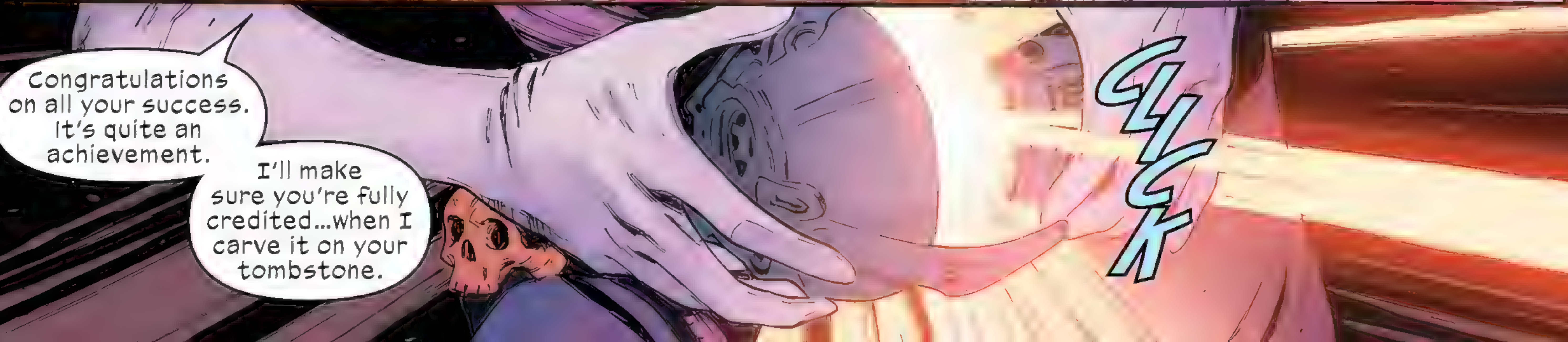
ZAK ZAK

AAIIIIIIIIII!



Behind me.

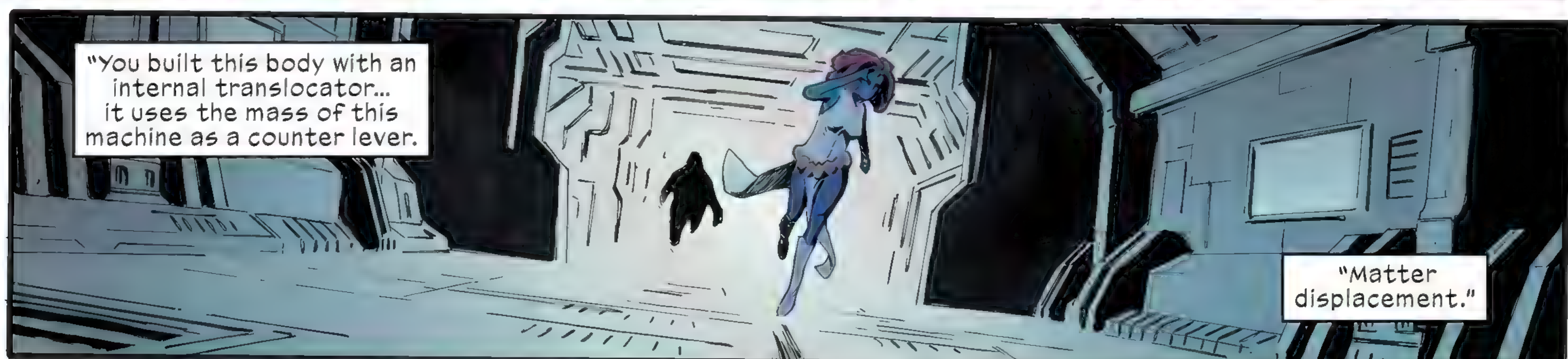
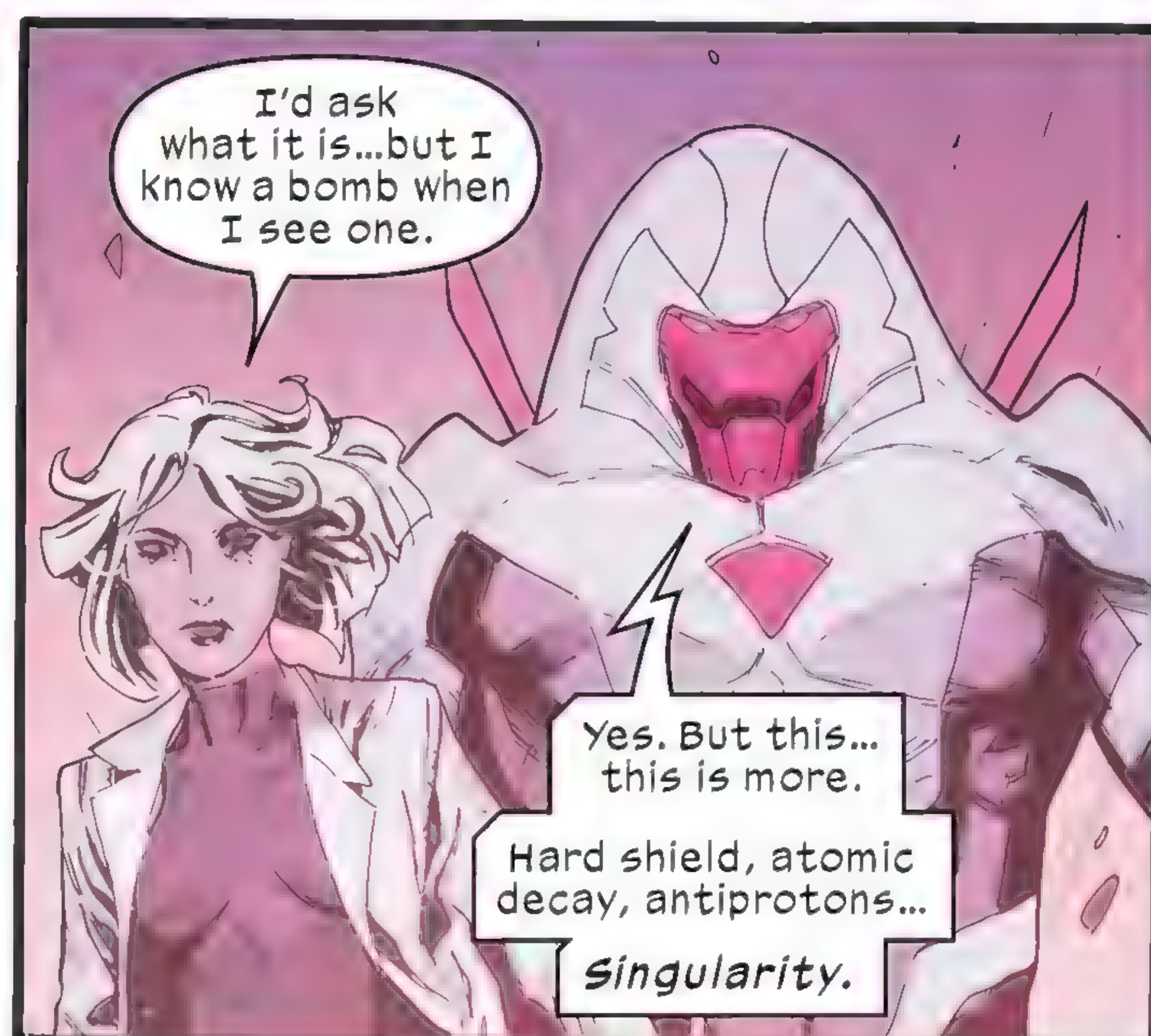
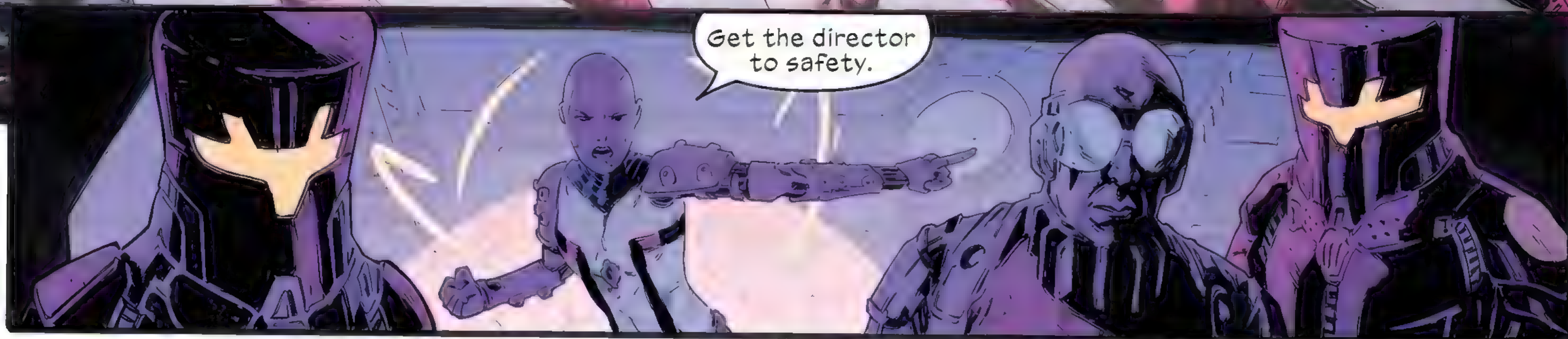
ZAK



Congratulations on all your success. It's quite an achievement.

I'll make sure you're fully credited...when I carve it on your tombstone.

CLICK

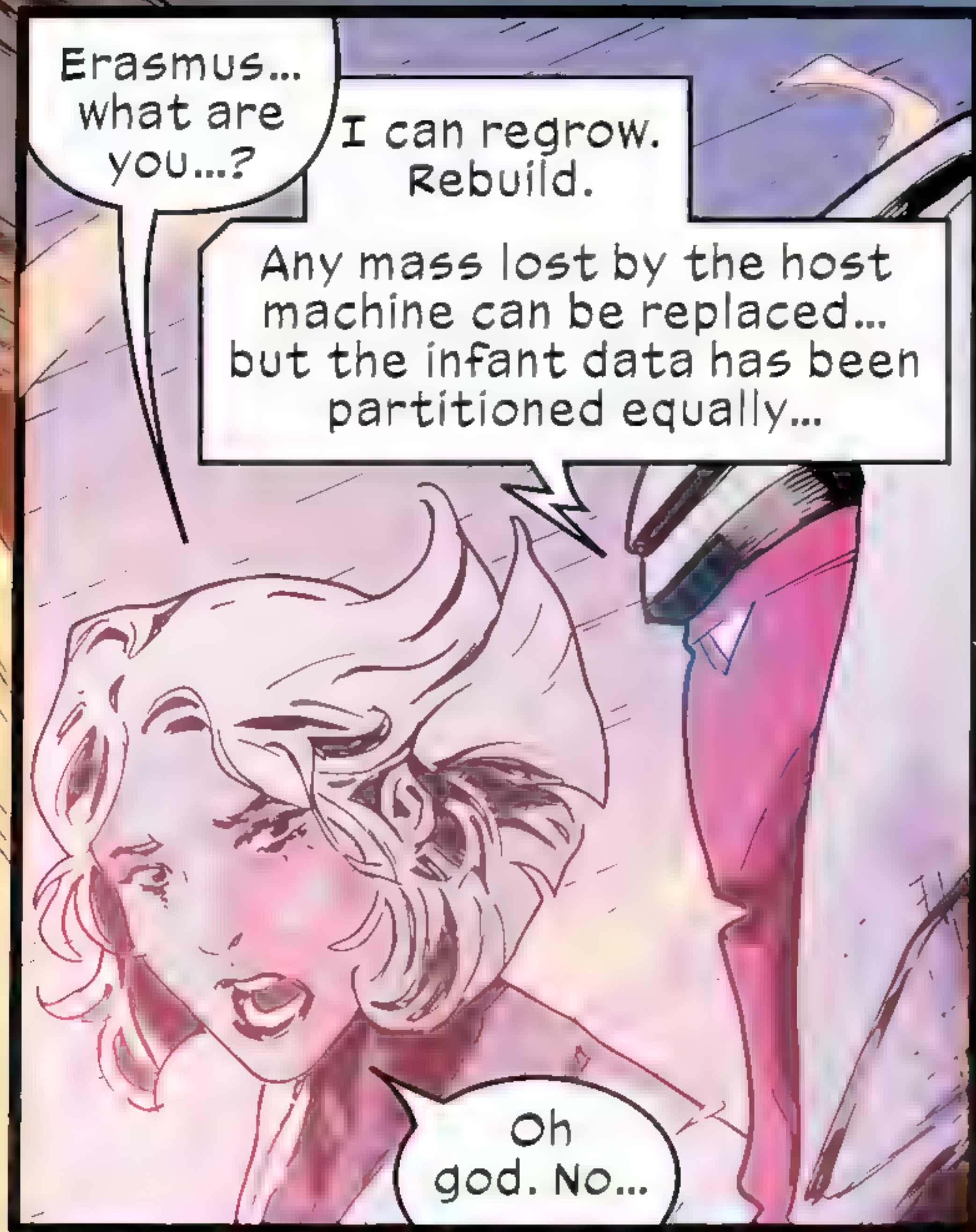


Erasmus... what are you...?

I can regrow. Rebuild.

Any mass lost by the host machine can be replaced... but the infant data has been partitioned equally...

Oh god. No...



"You have to wait for the memory core to grow and replicate throughout your host body."

"If you were to lose one of the bodies...that portion of you would be lost as well."



No. Erasmus...

I don't want to lose you again...I can't...I...I... just can't...



I am *so* sorry for what I'm about to do.

NO. NO.



But I am as I have always been.

Think of it this way, my love.

I would never save myself if the sacrifice meant losing you. **Duplicate.**

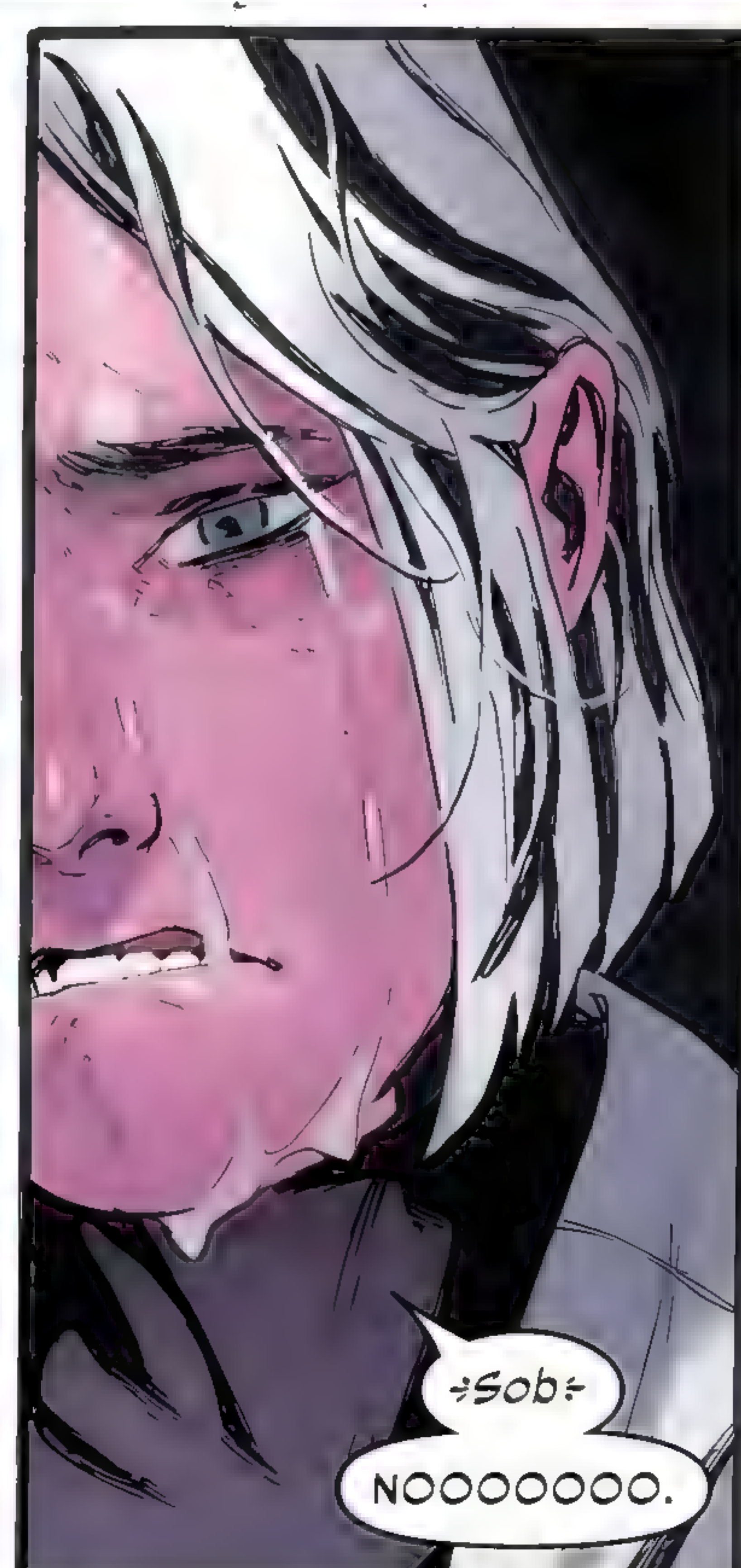
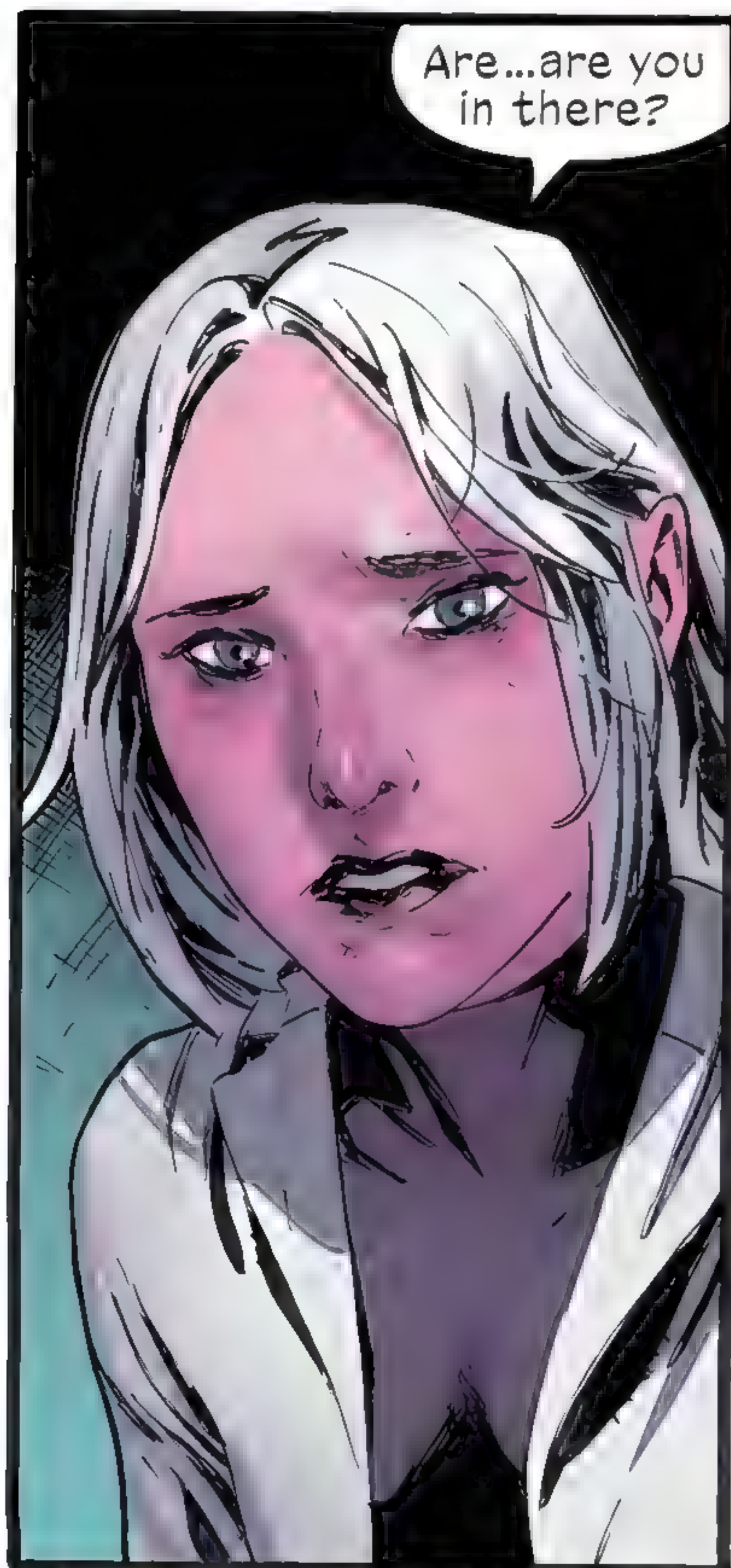
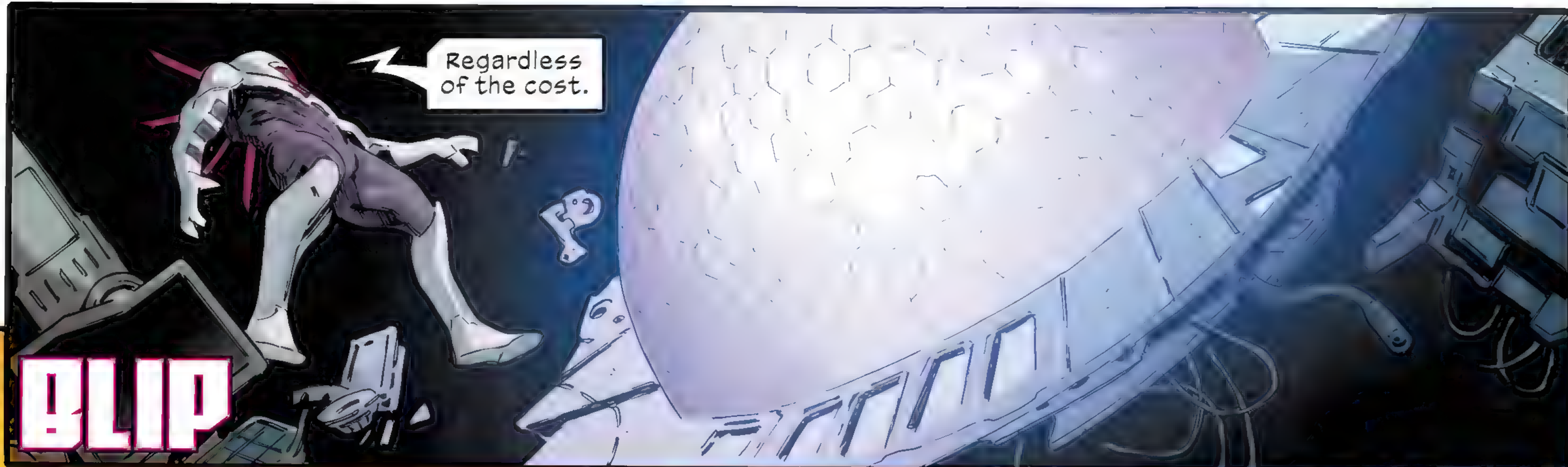
You brought me back so I could save you one more time.



And so I will.

CLIP







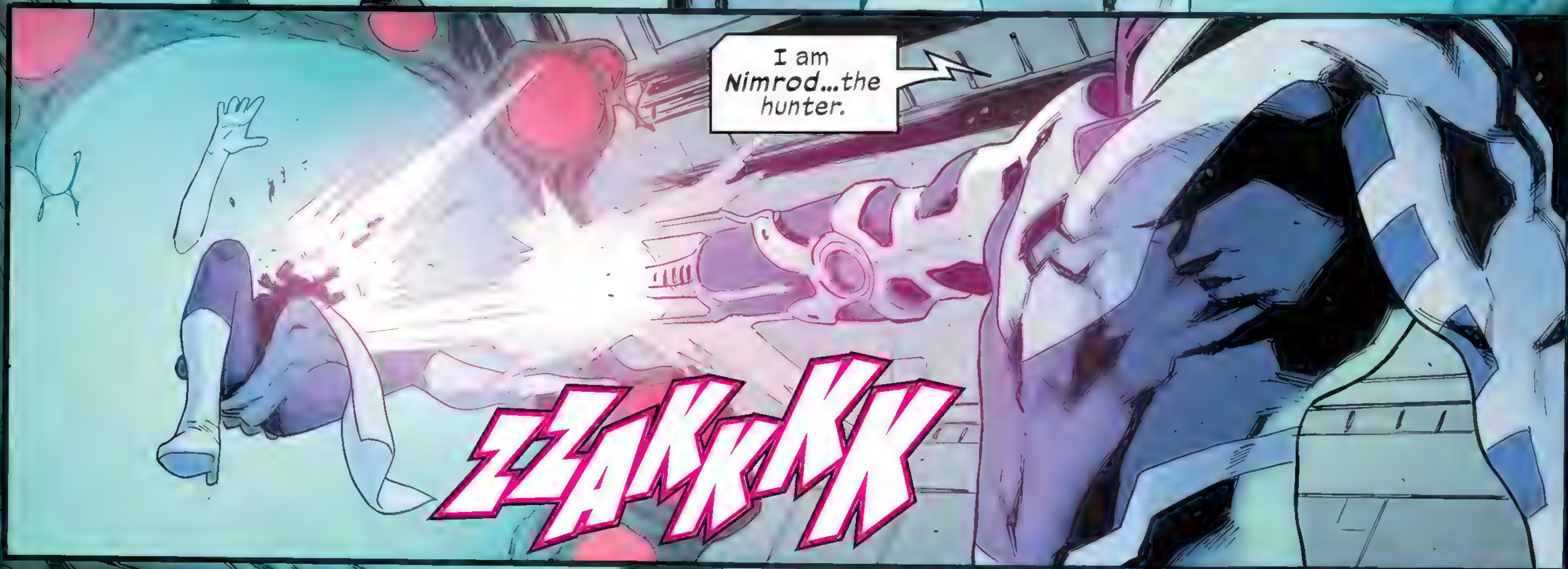
GHURRKK!

Look at me,
mutant.

*You have
failed.*

When you return home,
tell your masters that
today I was born into
existence...

...and the first thing
I experienced beyond
the love of my
creator was pain and
loss at your hands.



I am
*Nimrod...the
hunter.*

ZZAKKKK



"You were here at
my *beginning.*"

"I swear...
I will see to
your end."

...

Later.

How is she?

Inconsolable.

Such a fall. To dedicate yourself wholly to correcting a wrong, and then be robbed of victory by those who committed the original sin.

Most people can't get up from something like that.

But you did, didn't you?

Yes.

And so will she.

Tell me about the gate.

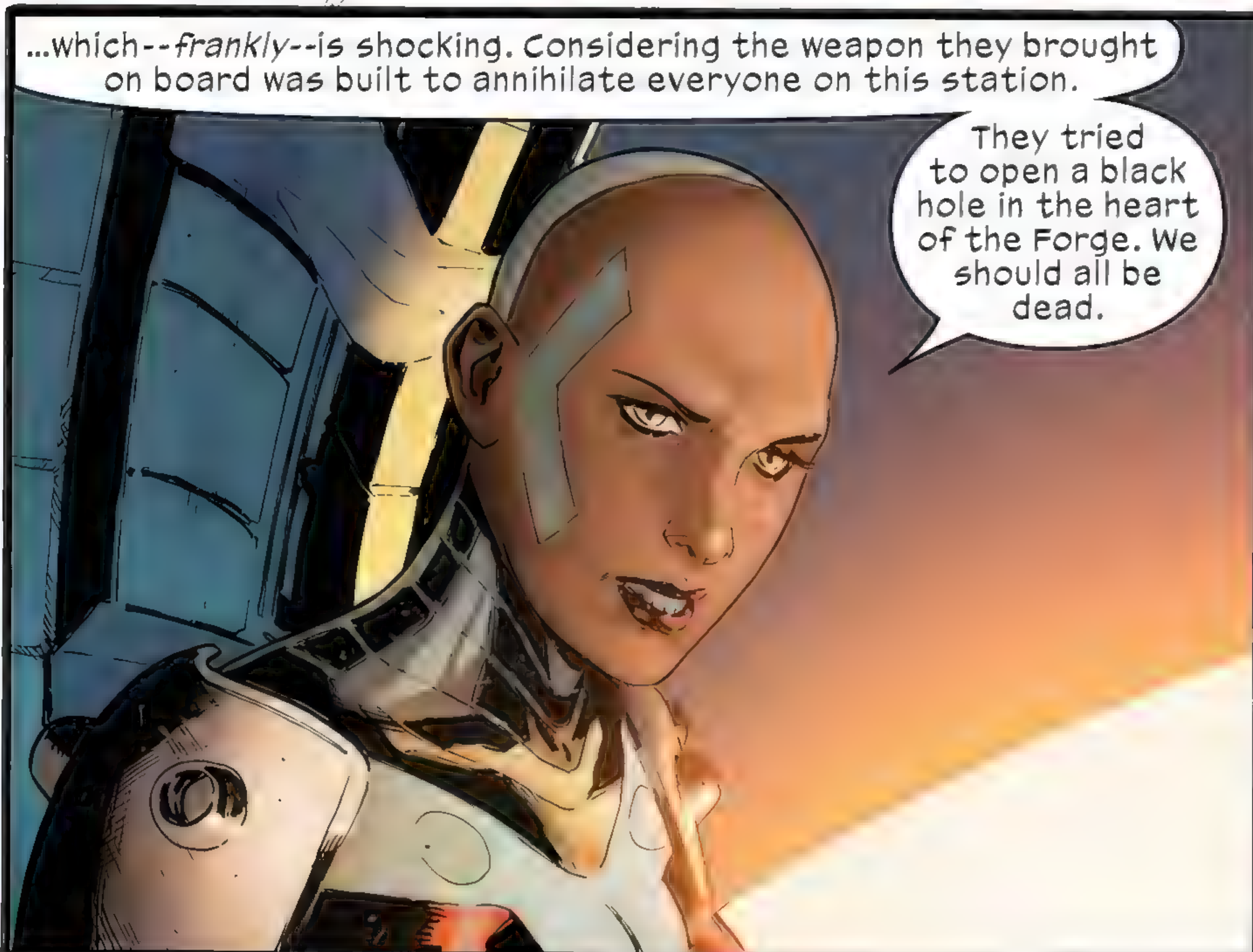
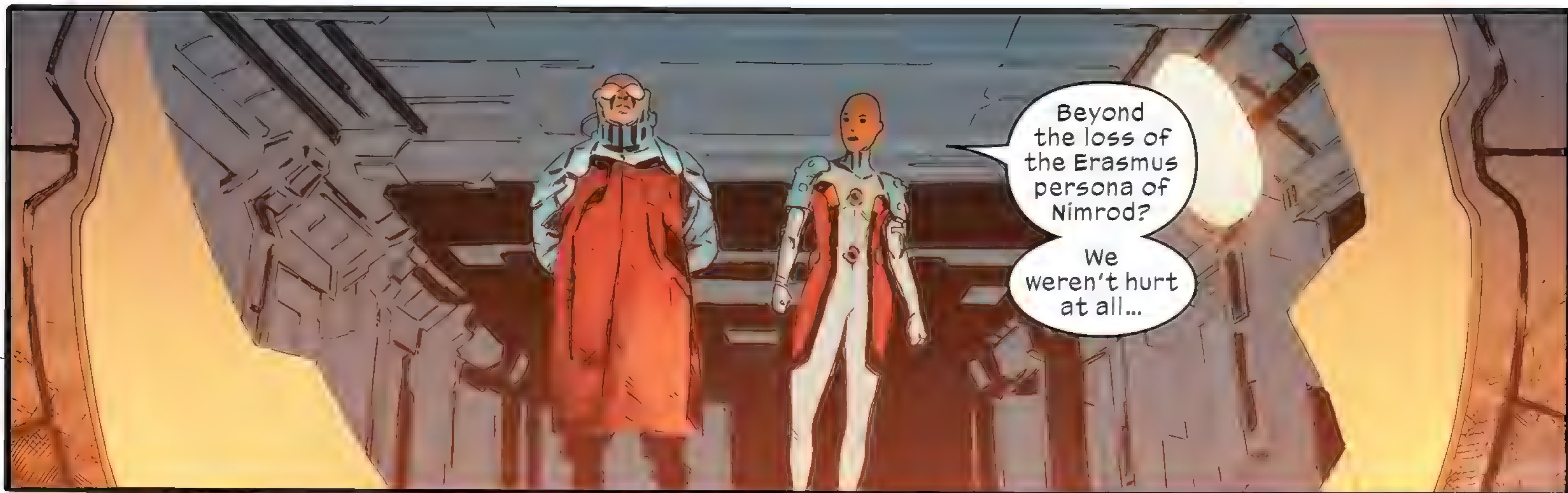
Quarantined in a hard vacuum. Translocators active around it. Other surprises, of course.

It's a death trap if they try to use it again. The situation is handled.

I can't help but obsess over the fact that they must have planted that gate before I arrived on-station.

Such patience. Then again, I suppose that's to be expected when your enemy is evolution itself.

How badly were we hurt?



Krakoa.

We tried to save you, but you died of your wounds immediately after you returned.

But now you are reborn, Raven. So tell us...

...what happened?

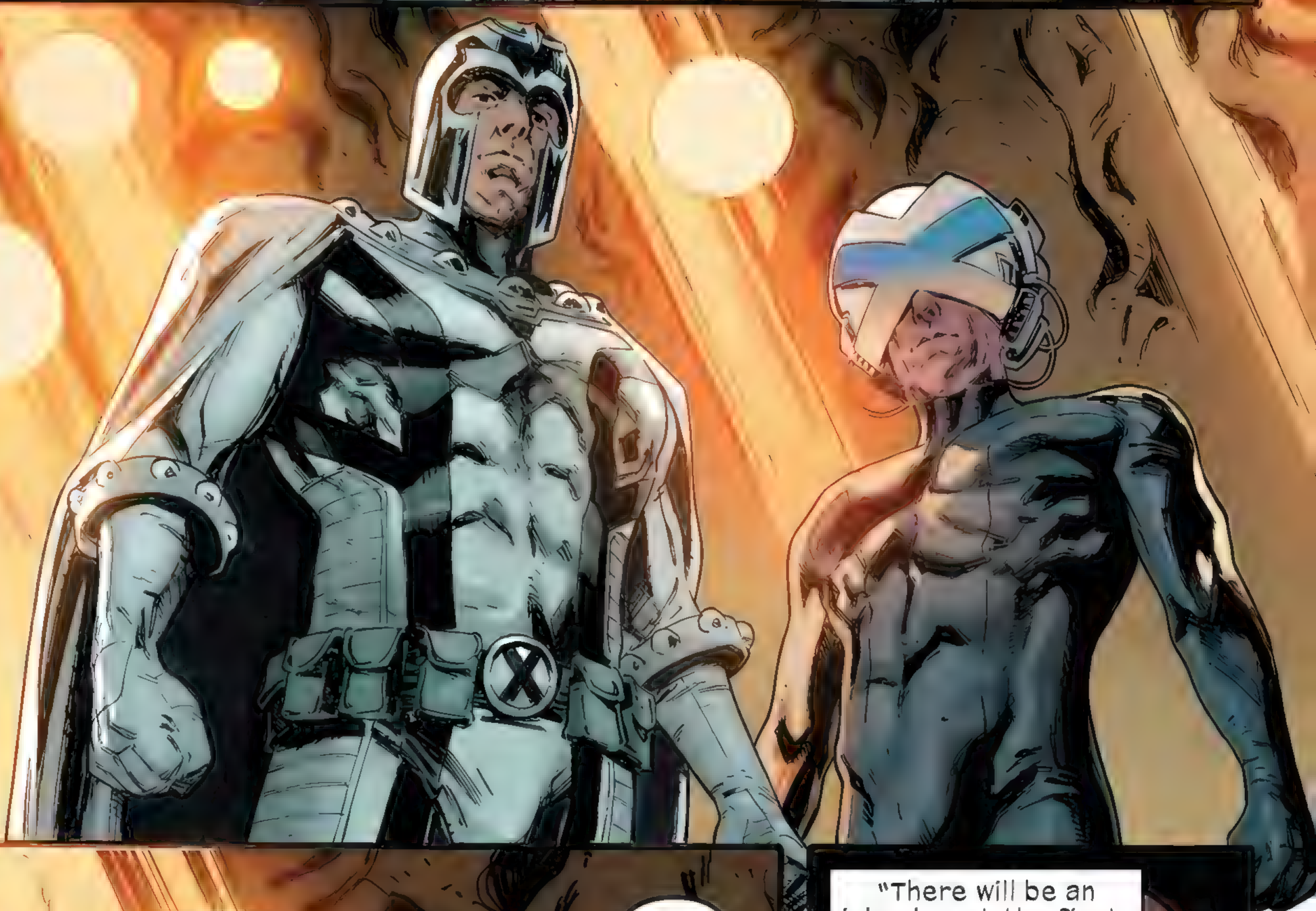
You backed up my mind. You know what happened.

We want to hear you say it.

I...
I...
I failed.

It's online...

Nimrod's online.





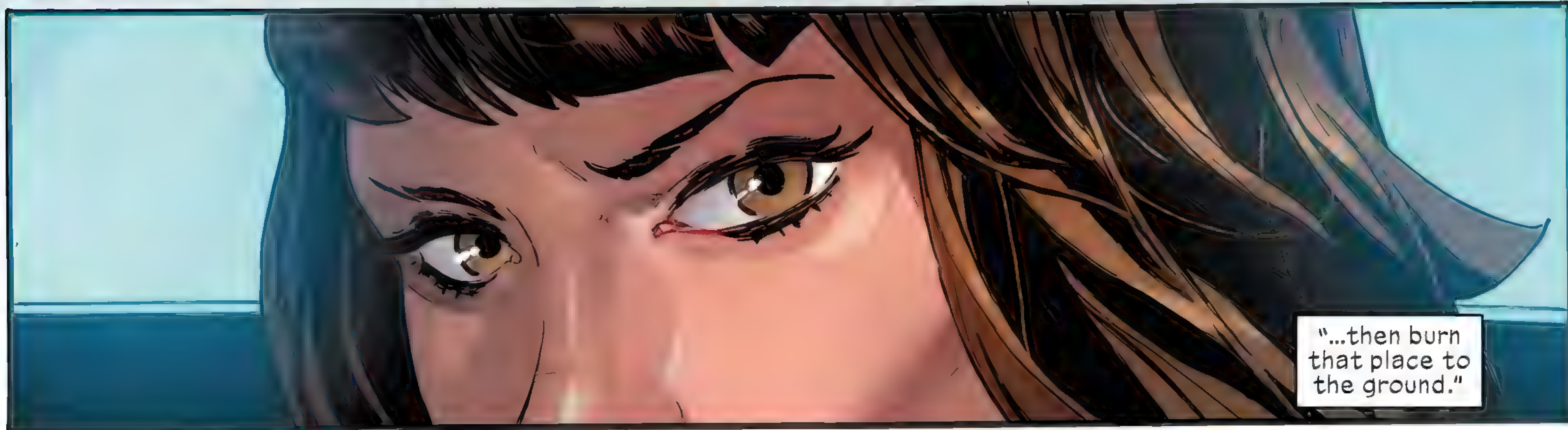
"This place will seem to be hope for our kind."



"When those days come, remember these words: **BRING ME BACK.**"



"And if you **cannot...if they will not...**"



"...then burn that place to the ground."

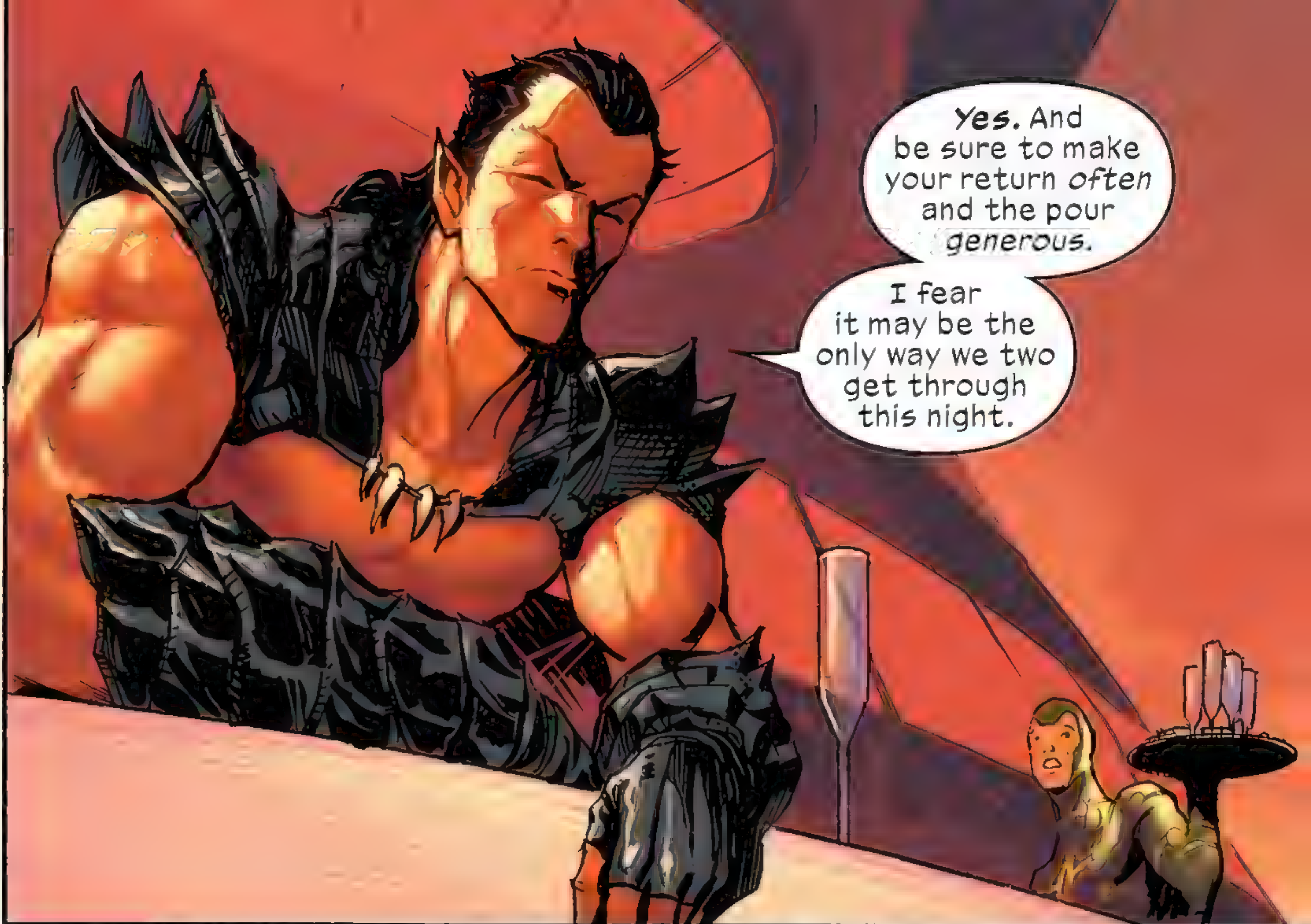


The Beginning

23

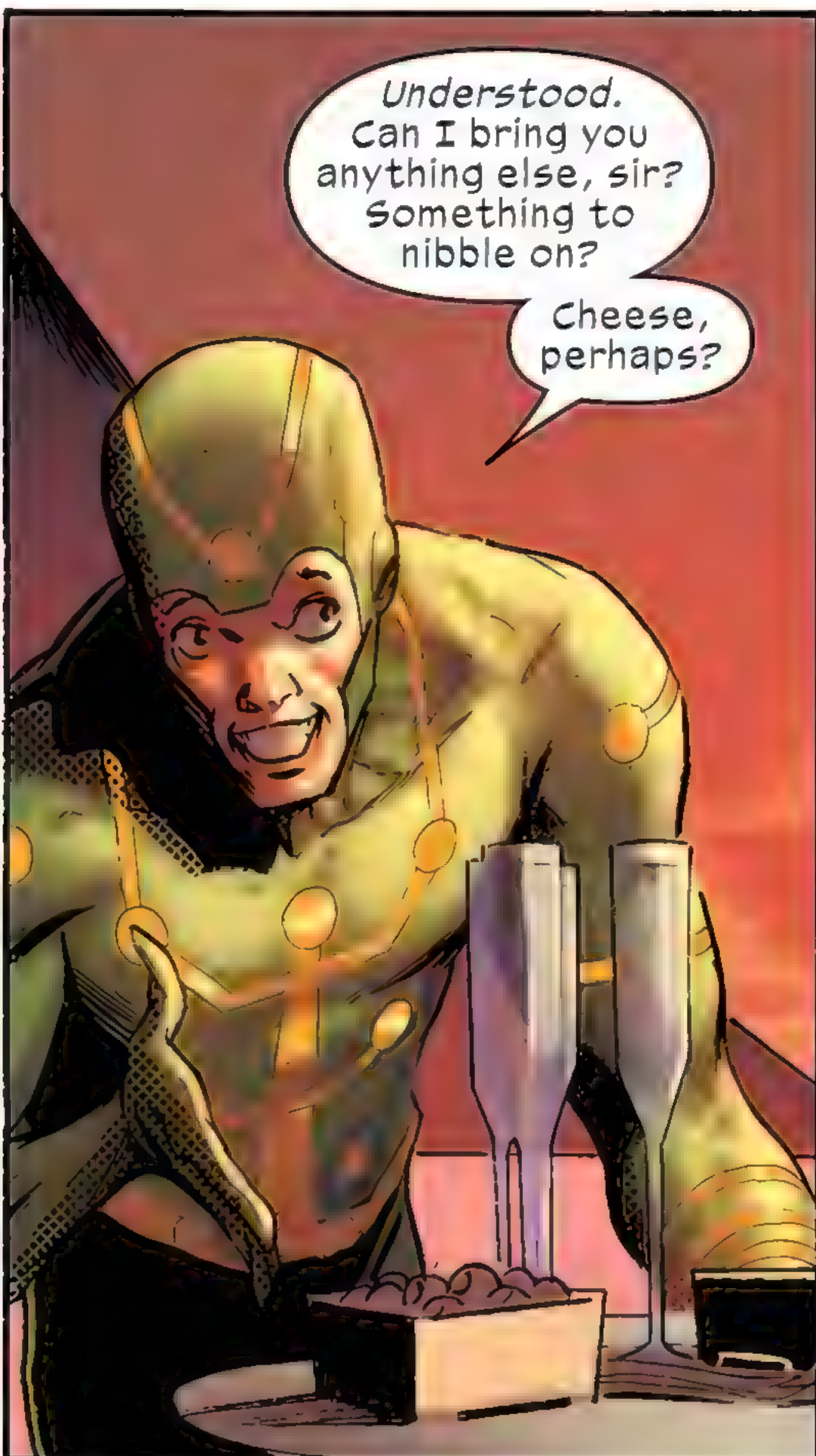
8:12 P.M.
Reception.

Another
drink, sir?



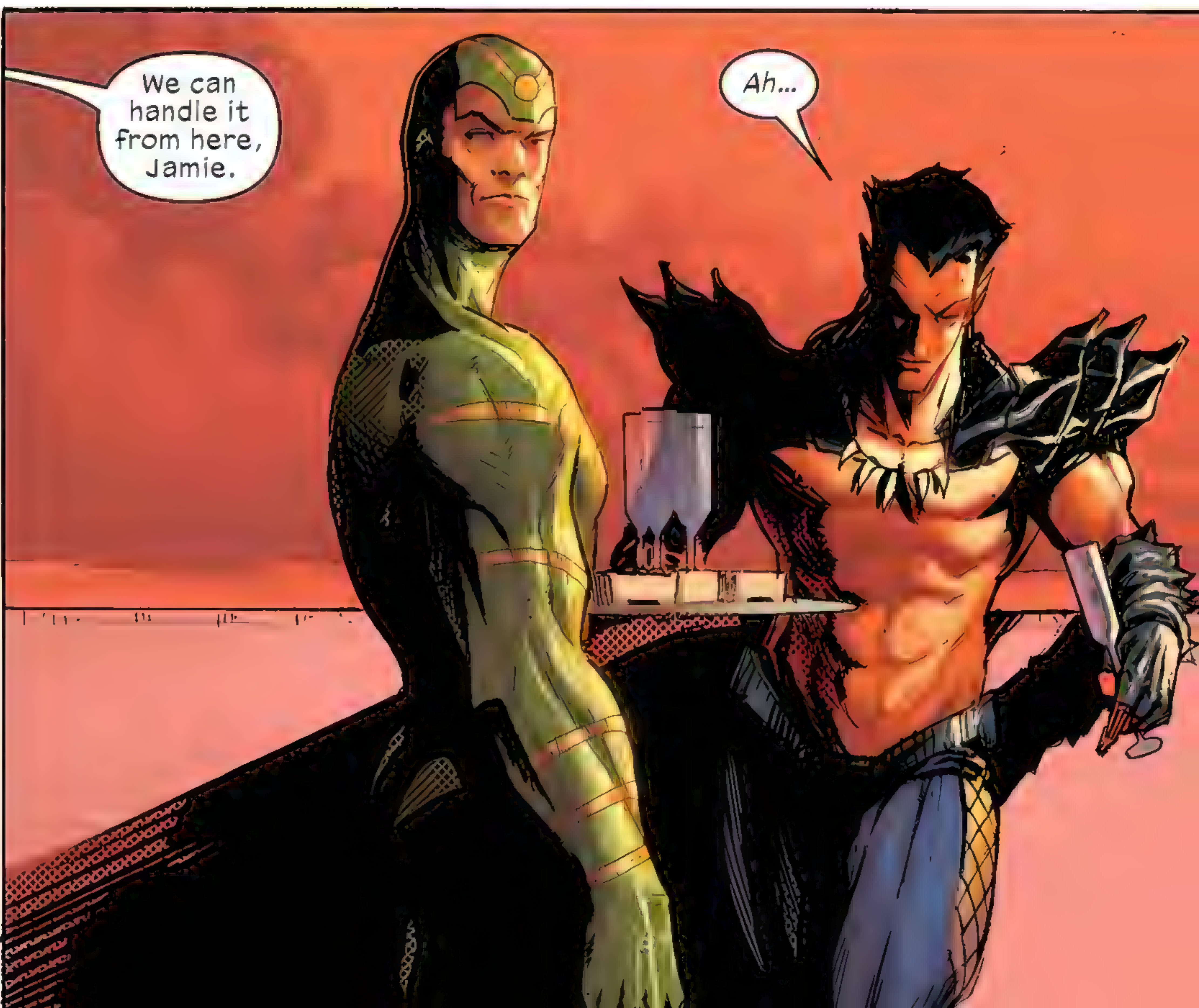
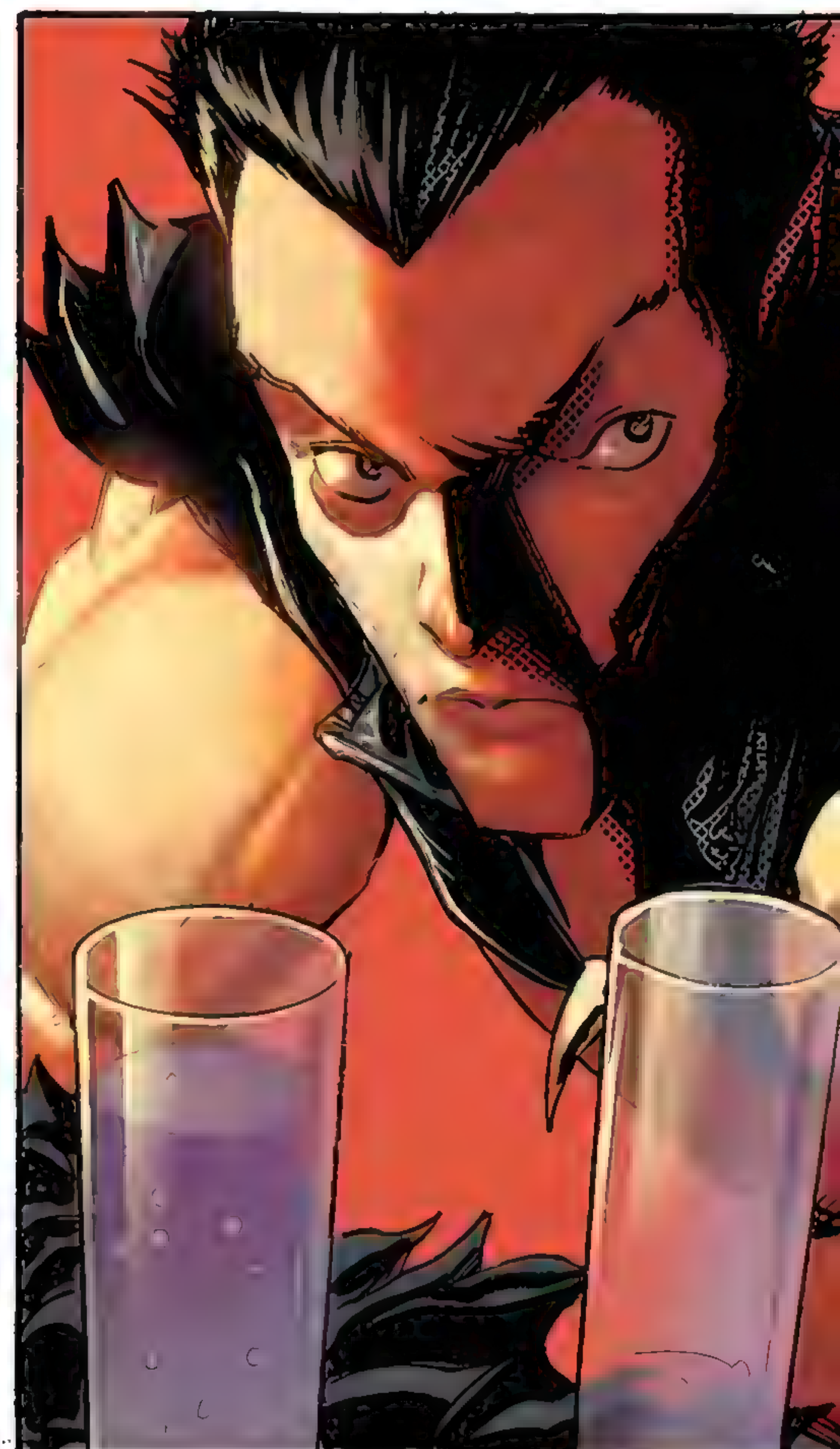
Yes. And
be sure to make
your return often
and the pour
generous.

I fear
it may be the
only way we two
get through
this night.



Understood.
Can I bring you
anything else, sir?
Something to
nibble on?

Cheese,
perhaps?



We can
handle it
from here,
Jamie.

Ah...



Charles.

Erik.

Congratulations on your party. It seems well attended...

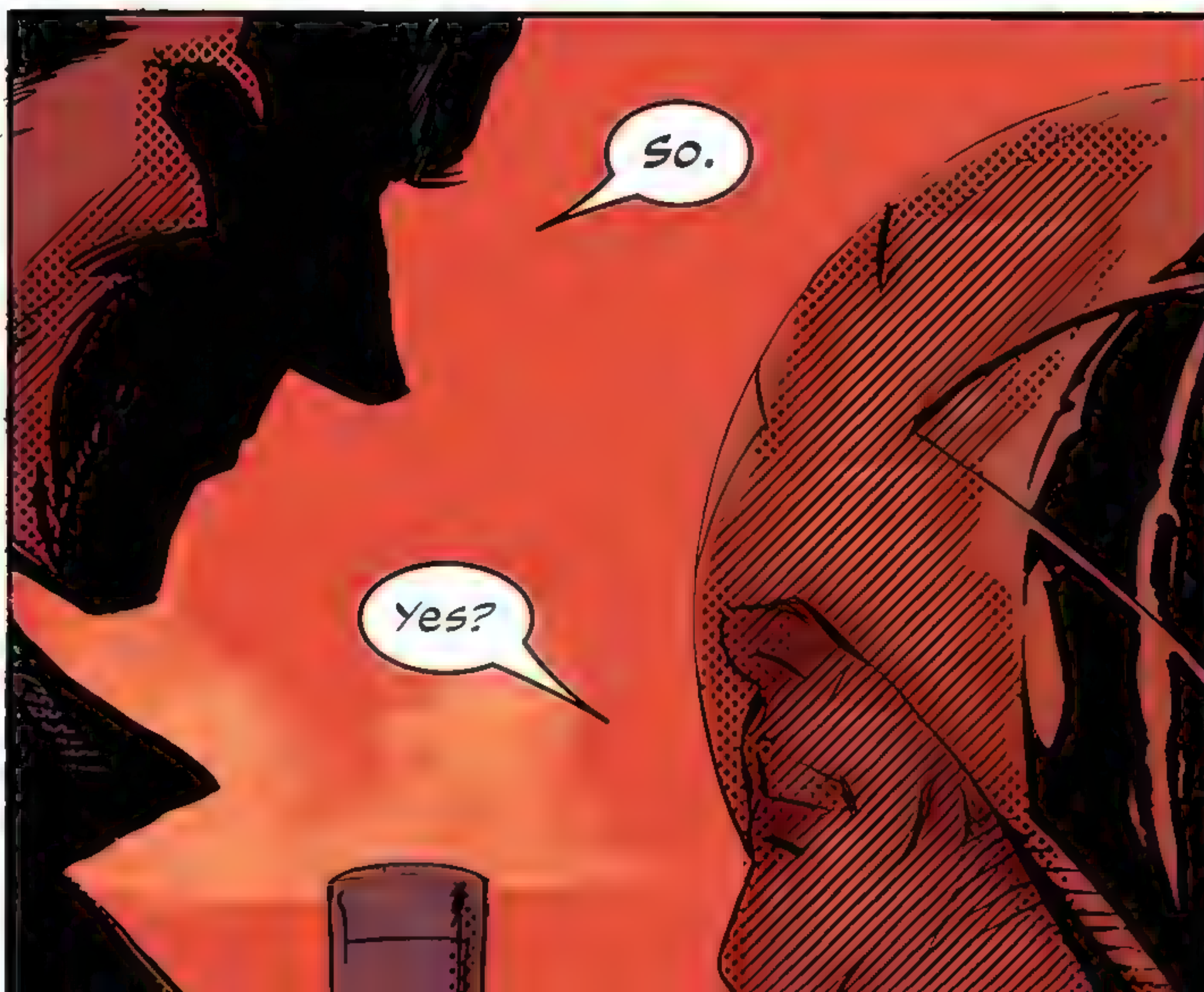
...if this were the event-- and these were the attendees--one might desire.

Thank you, Namor. You, of course, are the North Star of all our invited guests.



Yes. You grace us with your presence, your majesty.

We are honored and humbled.



So.

Yes?



How goes the empire building?



Well, *I think*. But in the *long term*, that depends entirely on forming *new alliances* to dissuade *new adversaries* that have swooped in to fill the vacuum of vanquished old enemies.

To that end, have we reached the inevitable time when you throw your lot in with ours?



If it's a question of *influence*...changes are coming to the *Quiet Council*.

We can offer you a *seat*.



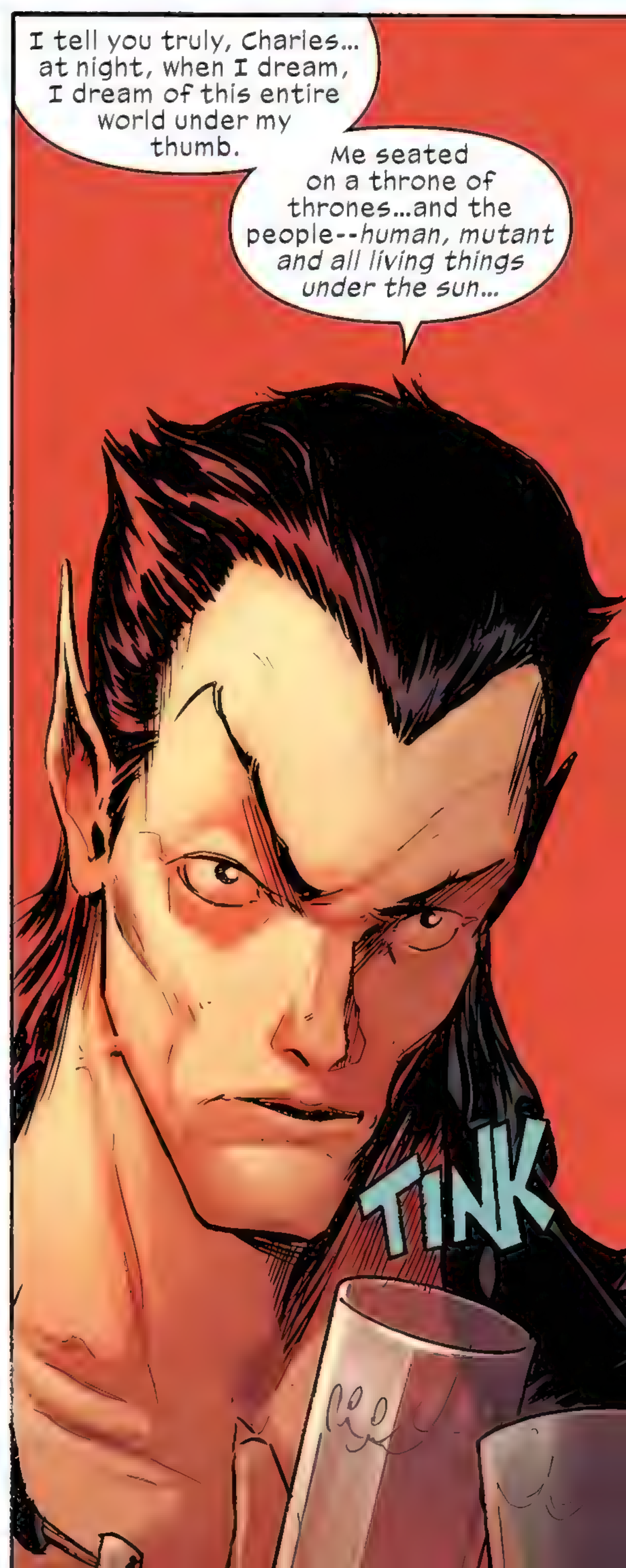
Offer? I think if I stepped one foot into your council chamber, there would be a rush to surrender a seat to me...even if one were not available.

Frauds tend to flee at the sight of a true aristocrat.

I am a *real king*, Erik. Never forget this.



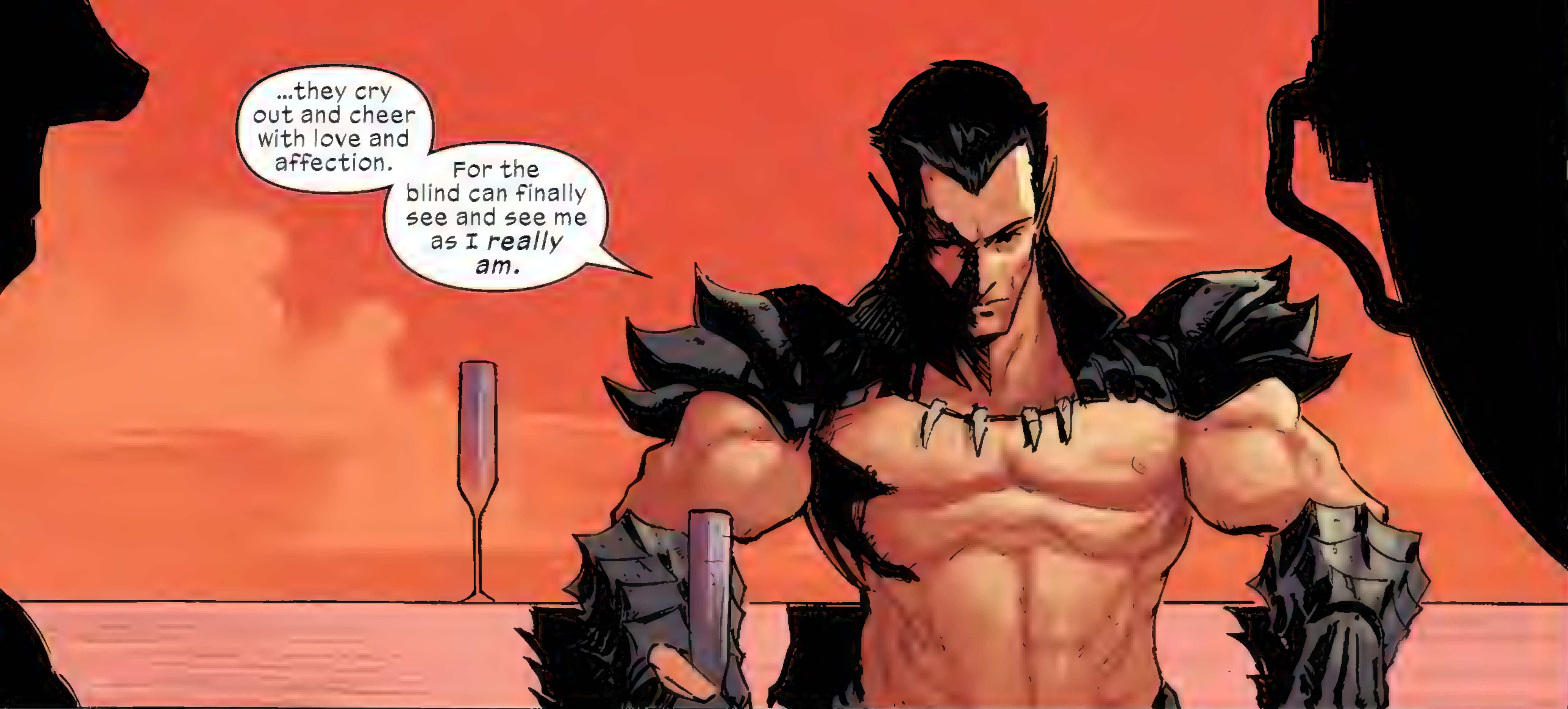
Then you should return home. Claim your rightful place among your people.



I tell you truly, Charles... at night, when I dream, I dream of this entire world under my thumb.

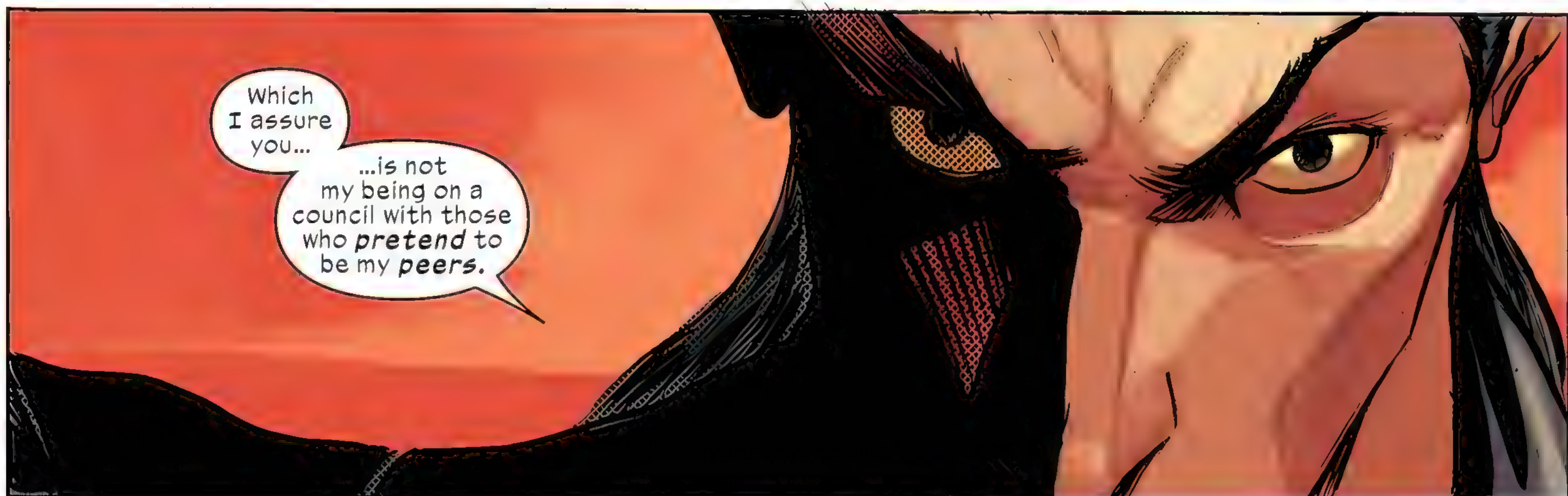
Me seated on a throne of thrones...and the people--human, mutant and all living things under the sun...

TINK



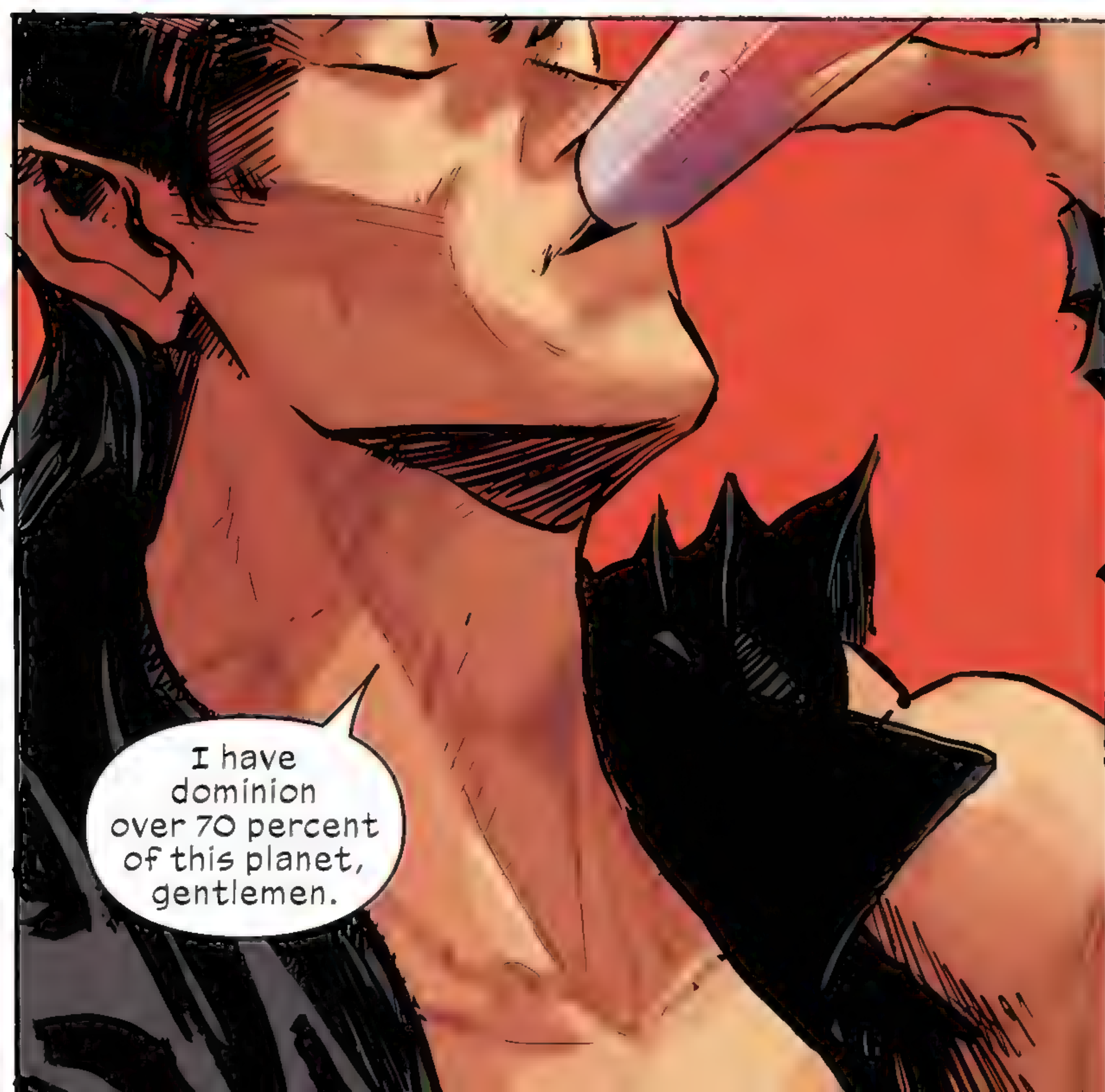
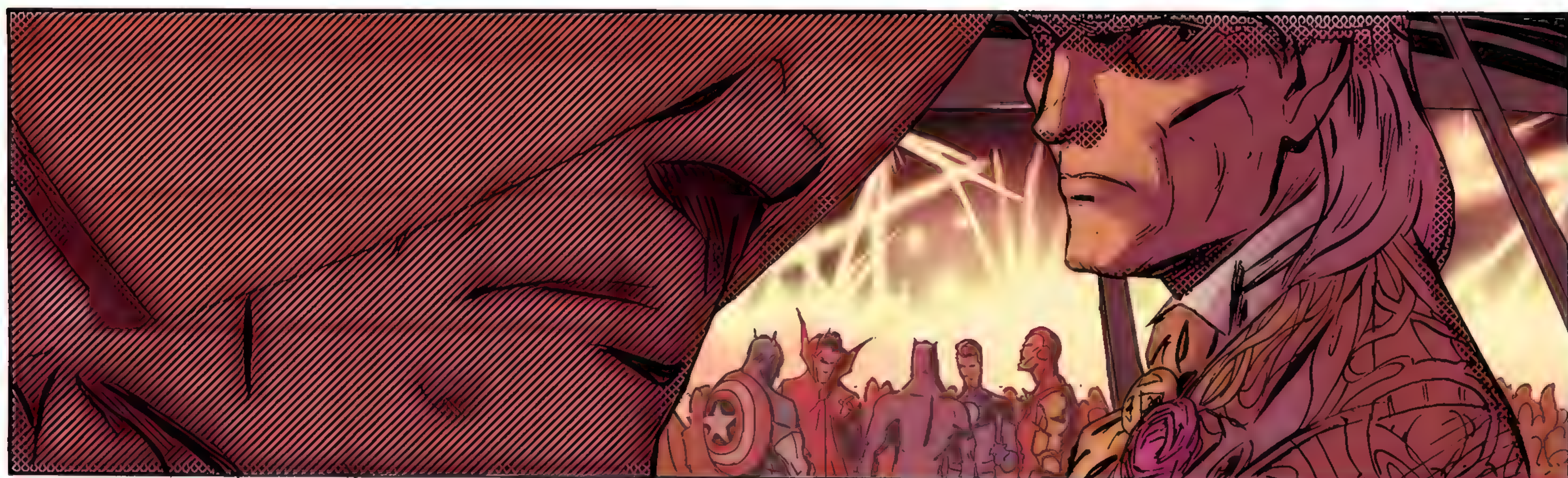
...they cry out and cheer with love and affection.

For the blind can finally see and see me as I *really* am.



Which I assure you...

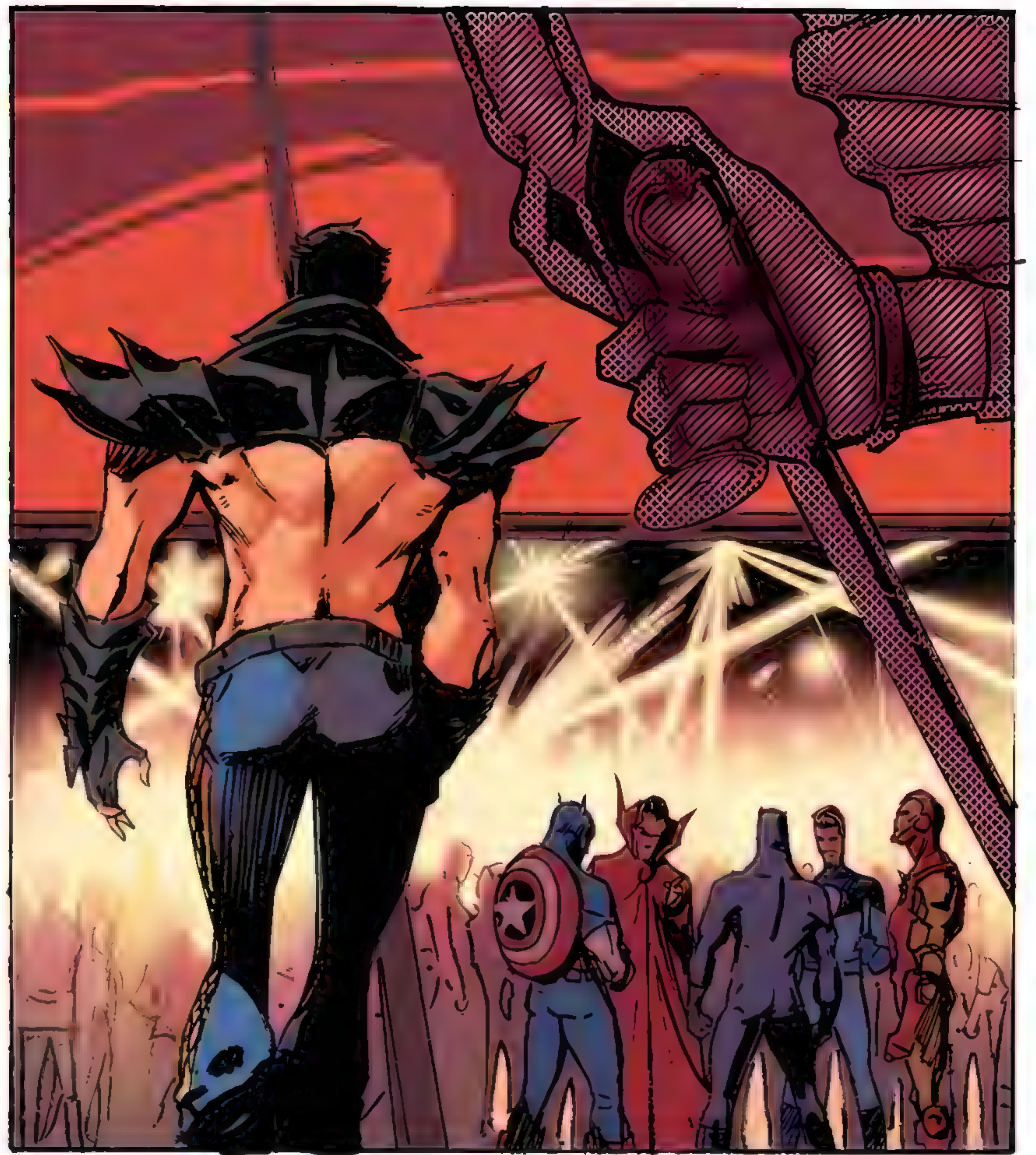
...is not my being on a council with those who *pretend* to be my *peers*.

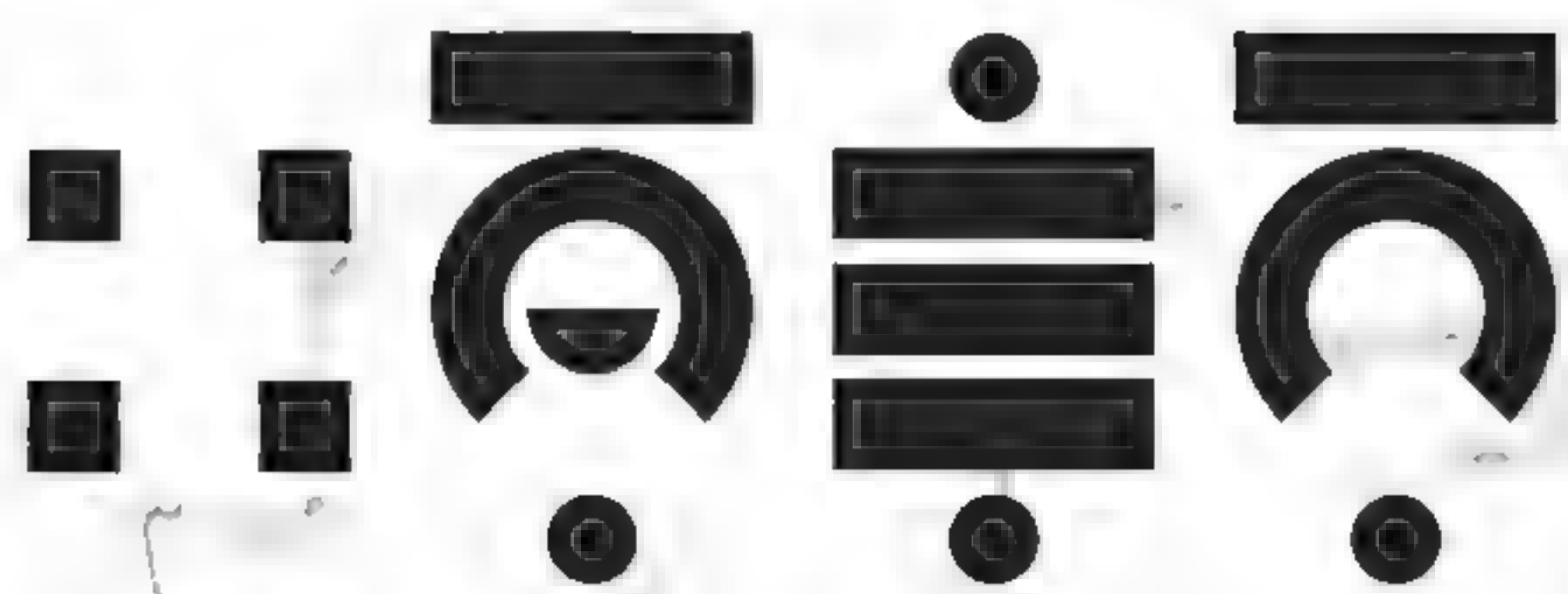


I have dominion over 70 percent of this planet, gentlemen.



You currently control, what... an island?





END OF AN ERA

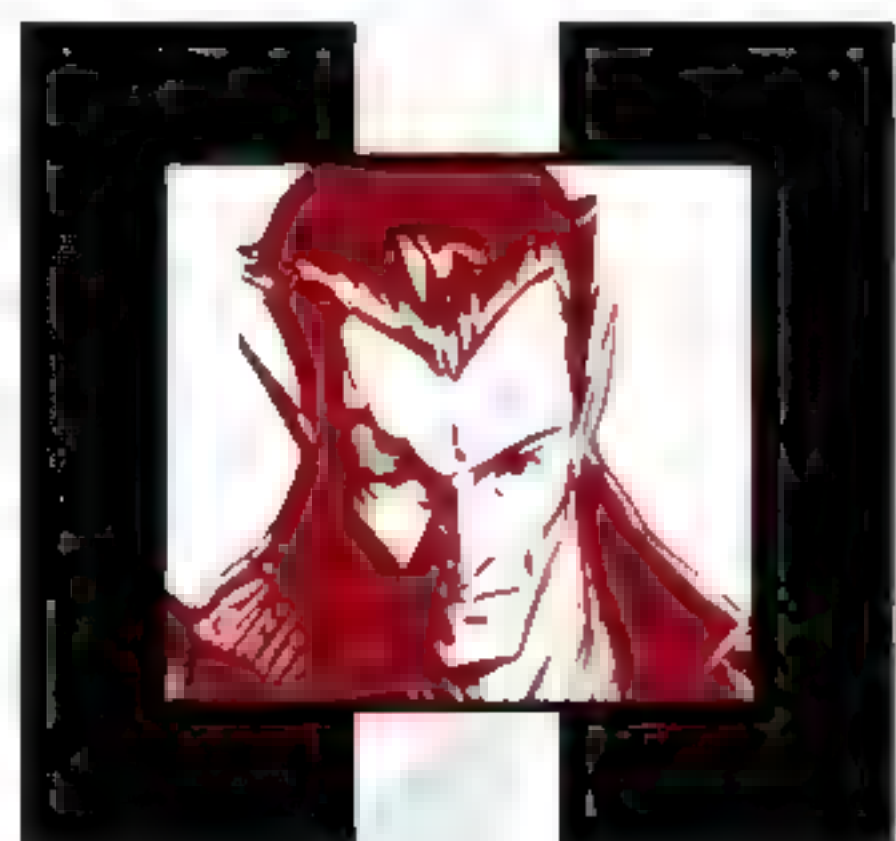
At the first Krakoaan Hellfire Gala, the mutant world is in flux. While an election is about to be held to select the X-MEN, the heroes of Krakoa, the new team is far from the only change coming...



Professor X



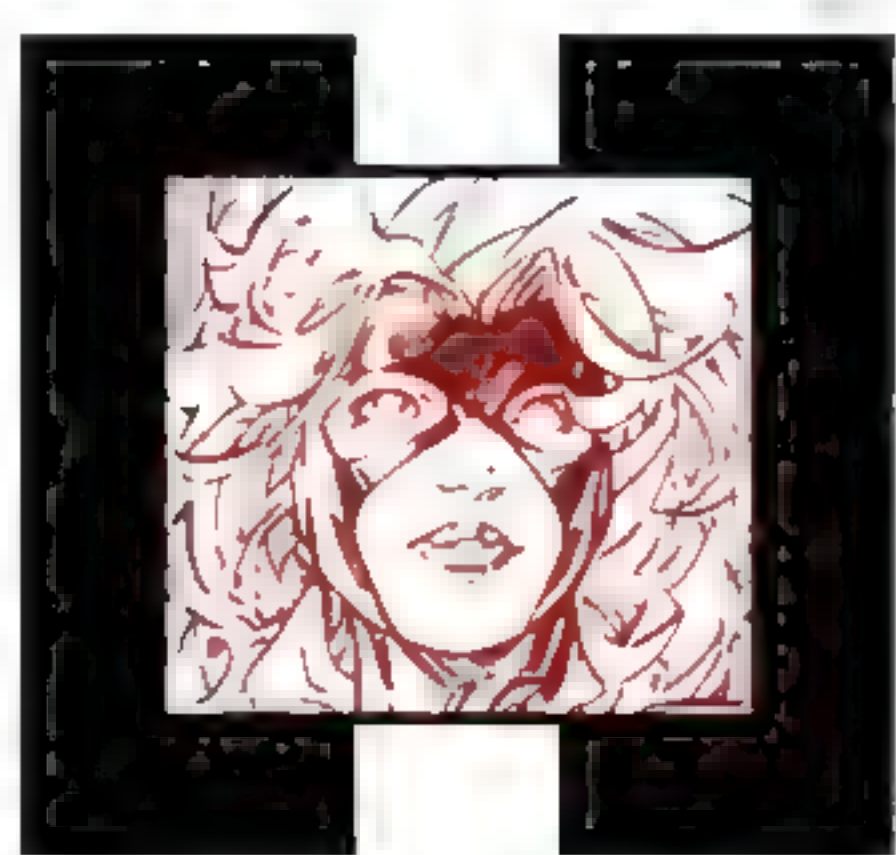
Magneto



Namor



Cyclops



Jean Grey



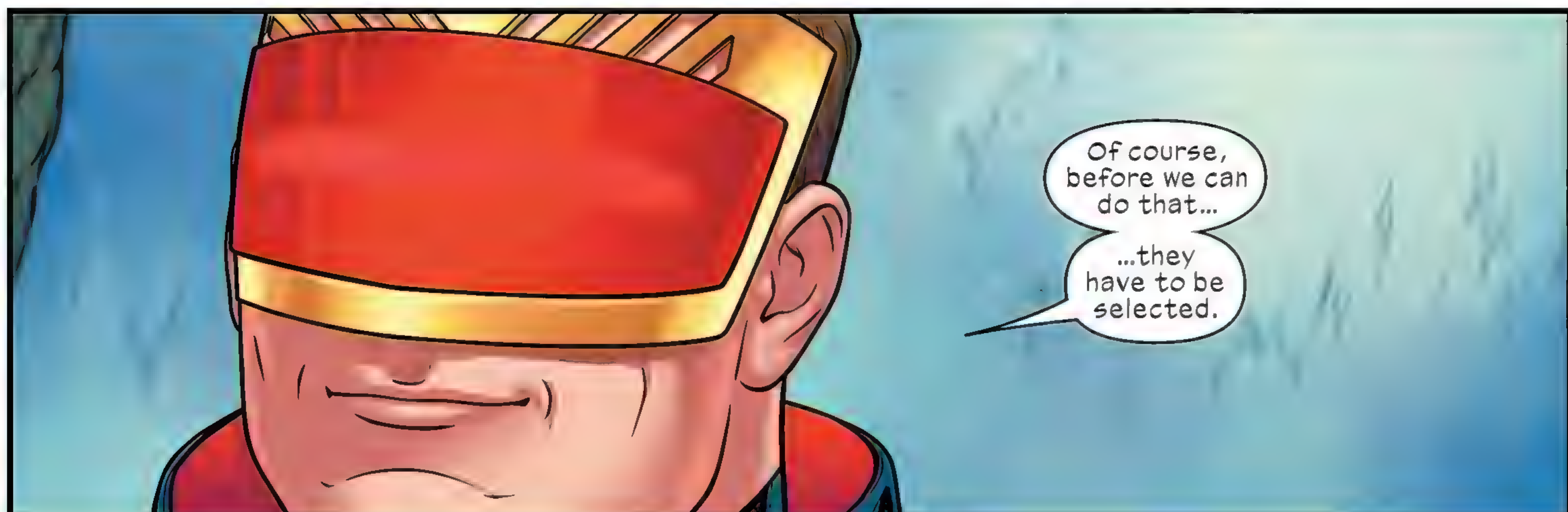
Emma Frost

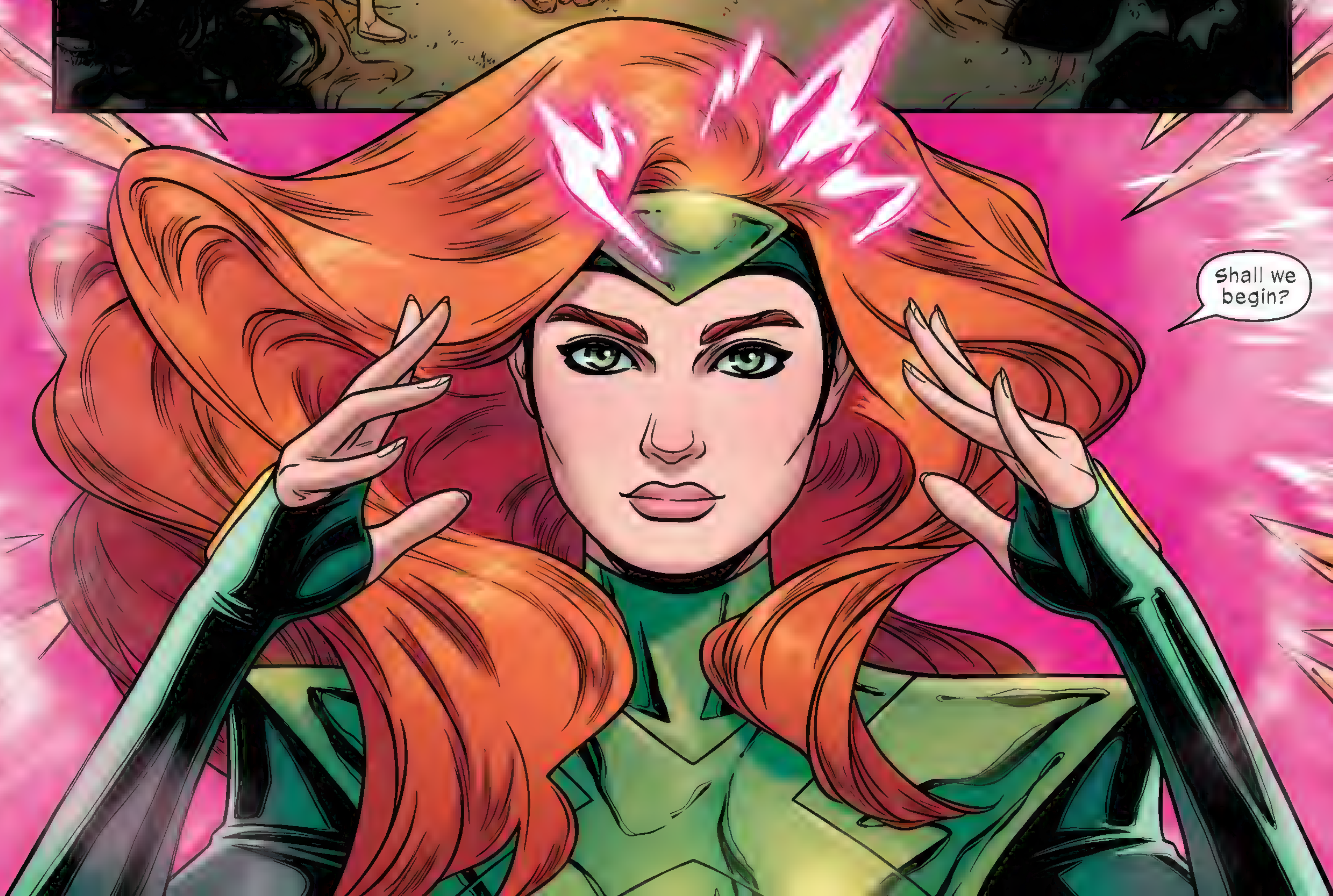
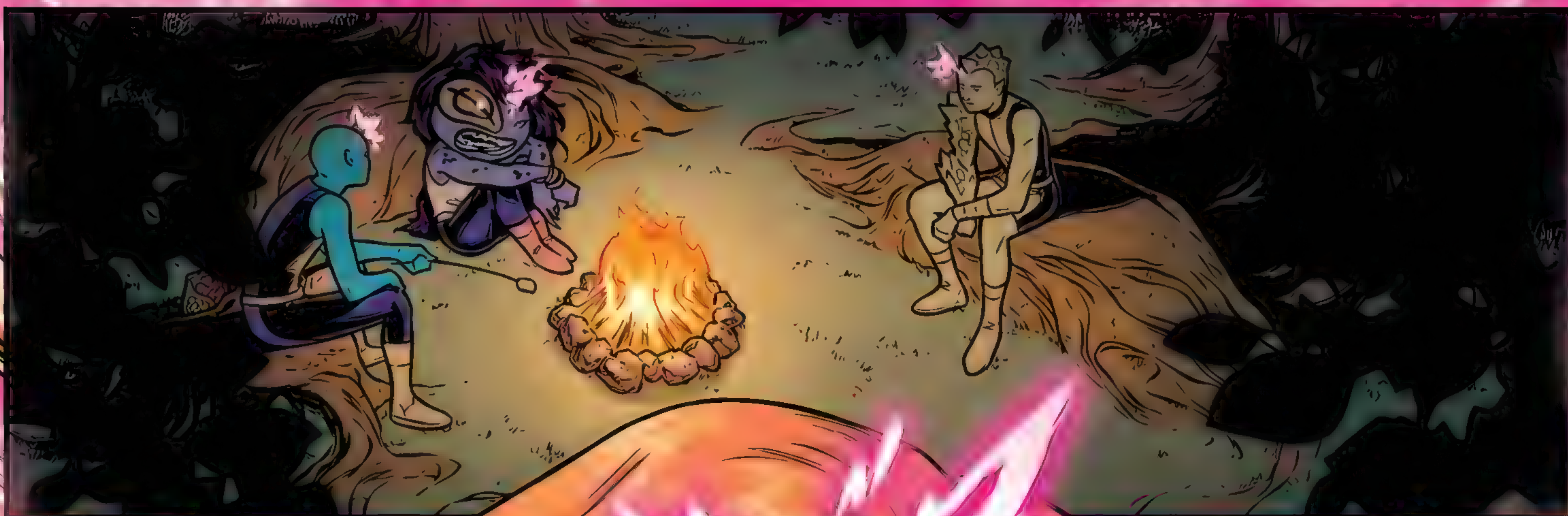
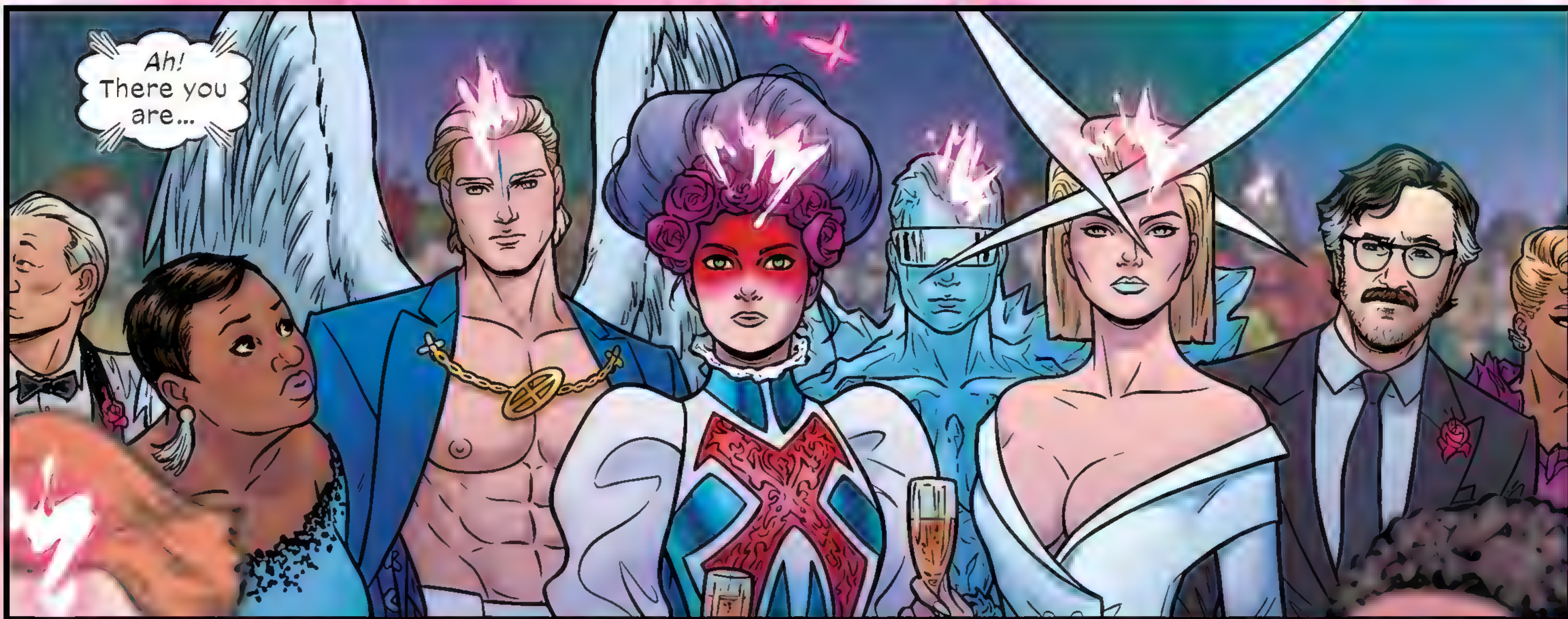


10:15 P.M.
Election.

If
I could have
your attention,
please.









What is this ensorcellment?

I dunno.

I'm so freaked out right now.

Don't be.



It's rather elegant, actually. Telepathically bonded, every mutant who wishes to is telling the others why they want to be an X-Man.

As they do, other mutants begin to coalesce behind the best reasons--and the ideal representatives--of what they believe their fledgling nation to be.



Should you be listening? Should we be listening?

I'm not sure we should be listening.

Okay, okay. I gotta know. Tell me what they're saying.

But just to be clear, this feels so wrong.



It's not.

If you have the ears to hear...they are shouting out from every corner of the Earth. No one's hiding anything here.

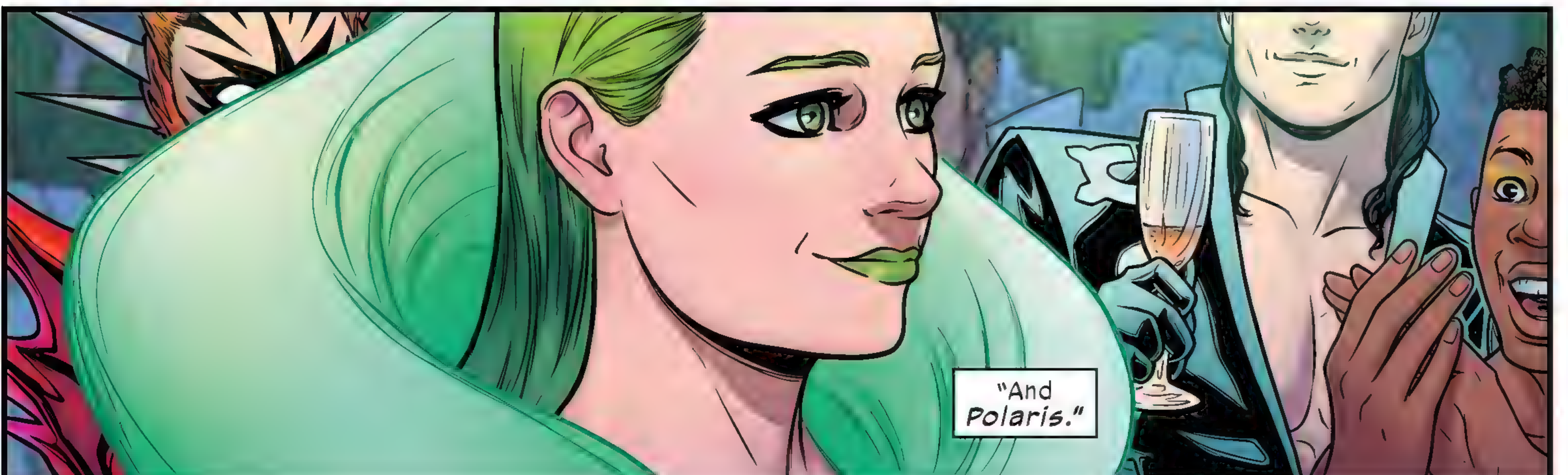
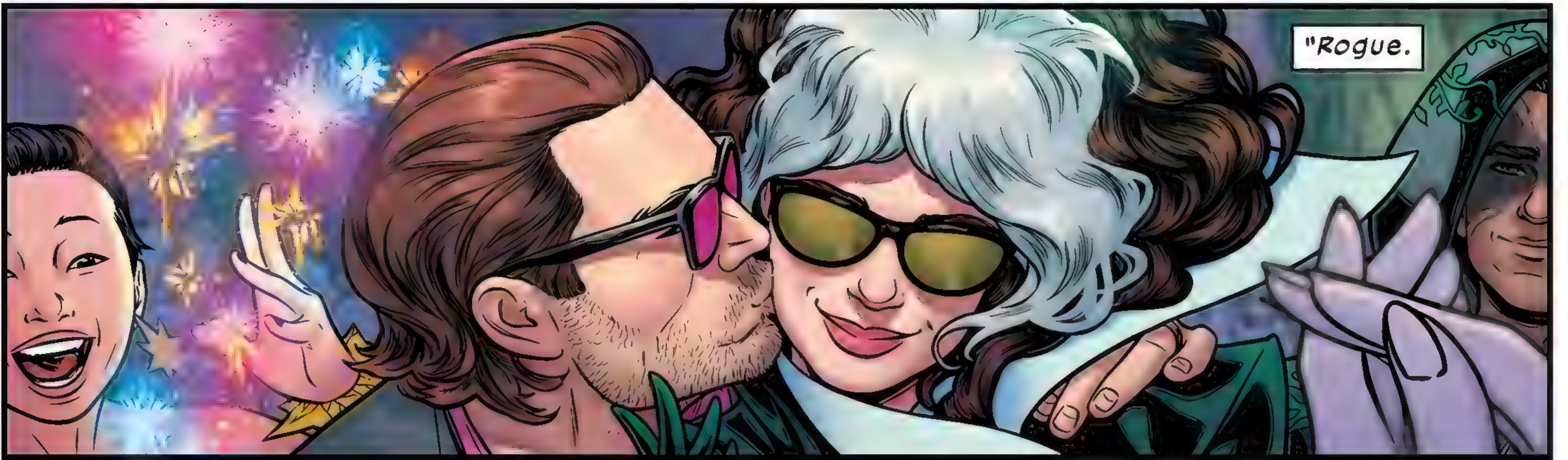
There's no shame. No hidden agendas or manipulation...



"...just pride."

It's done.

And done well. Step forward...





Ladies and gentlemen...

...humans and mutants...

...I give you...

...your X-Men.

RD
MAY



THE RED DIAMOND

[All the best news and gossip from Bar Sinister]

SINISTER SECRET #51

This Quiet Council member isn't actually fooling anyone, they're fooling everyone. Wear a mask long enough and eventually it starts wearing you. Such a shame, not being able to let things go.

SINISTER SECRET #52

She doesn't have it yet, but one way or another, this mutant always, always, always gets what she wants. Will it be given to her, or will it have to be taken? Doesn't matter -- the real question is: What's in the box? Could it be diamonds or something far more valuable?

SINISTER SECRET #53

I bet you'd like to know how this fittest-of-all mutant is handling the second genesis of his external life. Sorry, you'll have to wait to find out.

SINISTER SECRET #54

Seducer made an honest man of the island's favorite boy, but what unspoken secrets are coursing through the nervous system of the favorite boy's island friend? Are you listening? I know that you are.

SINISTER SECRET #55

Regarding secrets and secret alliances -- and the shadow play that is the great game of nations -- just how many ruling councils are there now circling the sun? I'll never tell, but if you say two, you're definitely too low.

SINISTER SECRET #56

And speaking of things that come in twos, two empty seats on the Quiet Council are two too many. Look for there to be moves made in the filling of those empty seats, regardless of how many favors have to be called in or how many unwise alliances are formed. Just remember: When everyone has a secret, no one can be trusted.

SINISTER SECRET #57

For far too long, they shared an existence. Now the one has become two. The first is a shattered captain of a demanding queen, and the second, a sinister sword under a sinister thumb. How long will the second stay there? How many more sinister demands will be too many? No one knows, but I think we're getting close.

SINISTER SECRET #58

It's still the early days of the Vescoran excavation of blight worlds, but an unknown material of immeasurable worth has begun appearing in the Crooked Market. So far, the Mad Jasper has snatched up every piece as soon as it's available for trade, but don't you worry -- our confederacy of capes is set on acquiring some. By hook or crook.

SINISTER SECRET #59

Promotions are hard to come by when everyone is a resurrected immortal, but sometimes a change has to be made when an unexpected variable is added to the equation. Heroes and their do-gooder ways -- always an inconvenience for a practical mutant.

SINISTER SECRETS REVEALED! [Reposted]

We don't hear this word spoken often, so when we do, it's best to pay attention, because when you square that circle, what took a long time to build can come crumbling down rather quickly.

[Inferno]

SINISTER SECRET #60

What sinister someone has been hard at work studying the vile helix of a vile world? *Pssst!* It's me! *Shhhhhhhh!*



11:35 P.M.
Exodus.



"Ah! How wonderful.
What a delightful
surprise."



I cannot tell you how happy I am that you accepted my invitation.

You--as much as anyone here--stand to gain greatly from any relationships that might be formed this evening.

I would be honored to do business with the *nameless city* of your hidden society.

It's bad enough that you know we exist when you should not...

...but the pleasantries and preamble are a waste of time we do not have, Ms. Frost.

Simply tell us what you *want* so we can get on with refusing you and escape this hellish bleed.

What I *need* are the contents of the Kara Kuduça. You can keep the box...I just want what's inside.

...
Do you have any concept of what you're asking for?

Oh...
I have a pretty good idea.



Excuse me. I'd like a...

Bartender, can I get a...

Guess not.



Problem, friend?

Can't get this guy to notice me.



Jamie.

One for the room, please.



Nice.

Yeah. Thanks.

Don't mention it.

So...



...what's your story?



Well...
It's complicated.

"I was blind. Blind to how the world worked..."

"...and then I met a man who taught me to see--see how things really were."

"I loved him for it."

"But the world, you see--the waking world--where we all live..."

"And because I loved him--because I believed in him...and, in a way, worshipped him--I claimed the things that he had faith in as my own."

"He called it his dream. It was a good one."

"...it is a killer of dreams. A destroyer of things you believe in."

"So when I grew older, I realized it was foolish to...deify him. Honestly, it's unfair to expect that kind of perfection from anyone."

"After all, we're all flawed and imperfect..."

"There is no real difference between any of us. No matter how much we believe the lie that there is."



"You see, he wasn't a savior. He was just a man--a mutant--like me."

"And his dreams--which still make me smile to this day--are no more valid than anyone else's. Including mine."



"I love the idea of that. The promise of it."

"So what's my story?"

"I'm a dreamer."

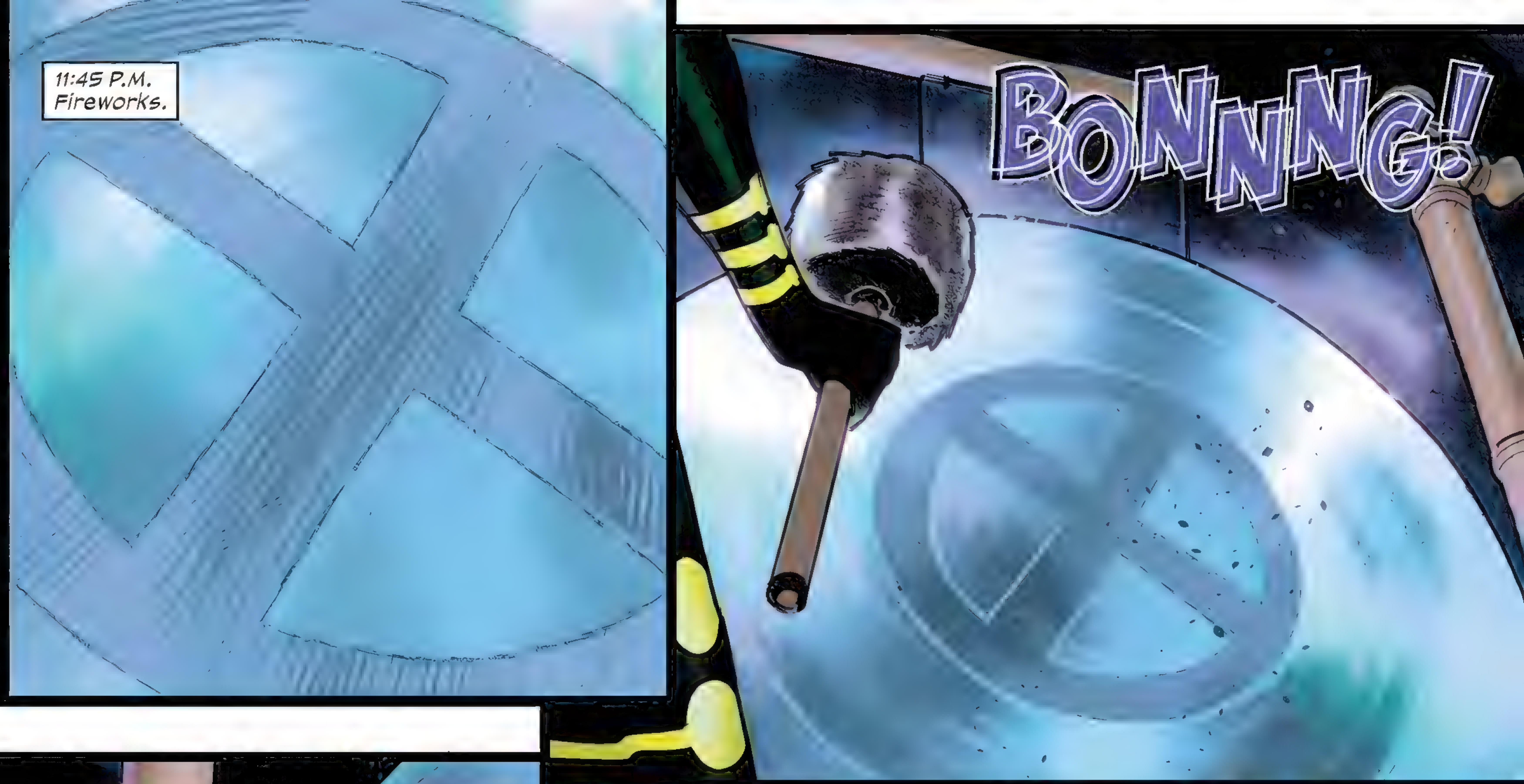
"I'm an X-Man."



You guys have a good night.



11:45 P.M.
Fireworks.





It's an interesting thing.

An ending.

Yes, it is often simply a matter of perspective. What seems to be an ending for you might be the beginning for someone else...

...or, more appropriately, what seems to be the ending of an occasion--let's call it a party, a gala, even--might be the start of a new proceeding altogether.



A second event unto itself.

Expansion, if I must put a word to it.





I'm going to connect all our minds now.

All of us--human and mutant...



...as I want to offer you a...unique view of the show.



You can refuse, of course...but fair warning...



...this is one of those "where were you at when" moments...



...and it would be a shame if being closed-minded made you miss it.





...a soft
exhale...

...and
fireworks...at
the *evening's*
end.

Which is
not the end
at all...

...but the
beginning of a
new age.



Giant-Size X-Men: Magneto

by Ben Oliver







Giant-Size X-Men: Fantomex

by Rod Reis

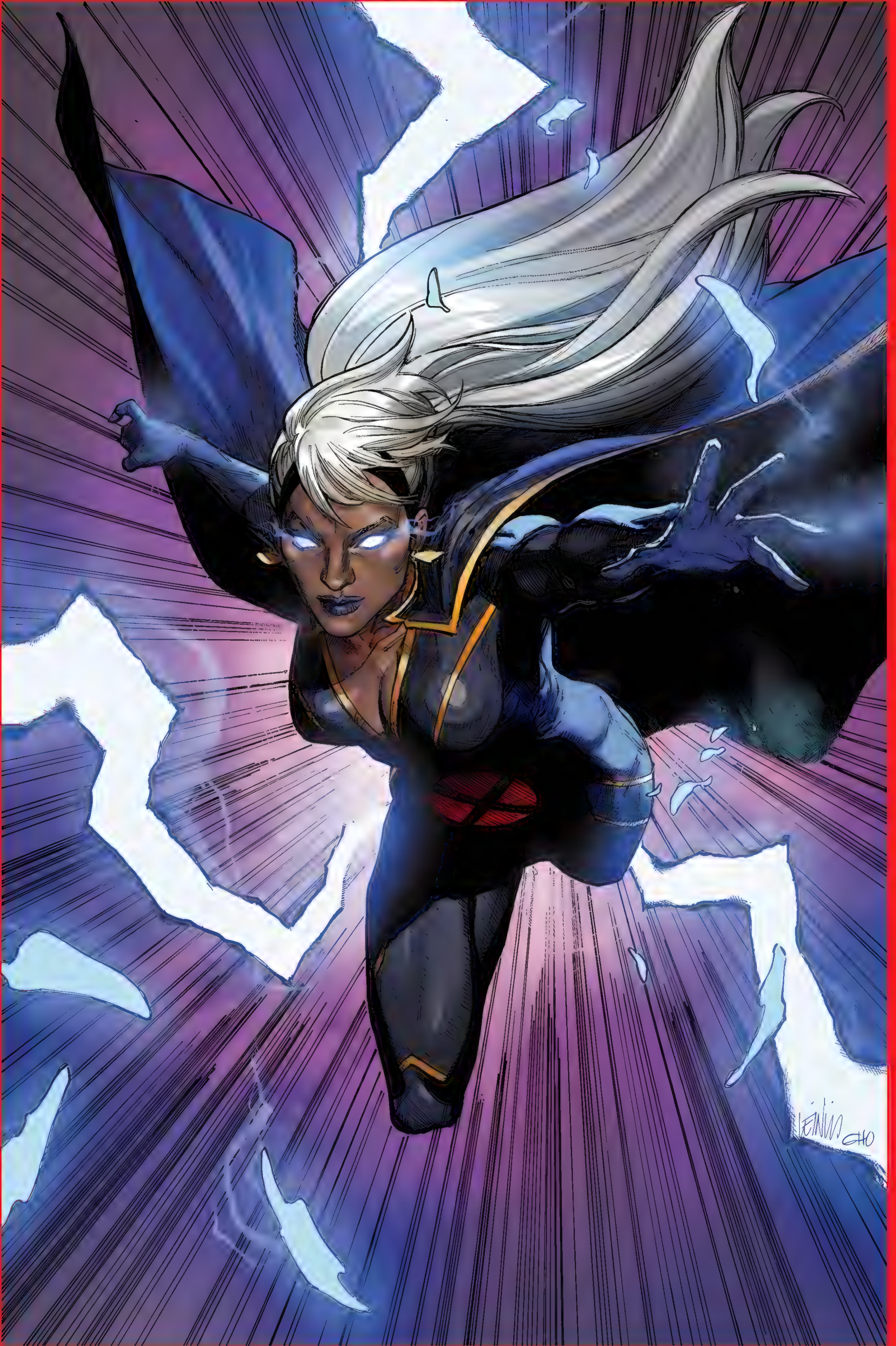


Giant-Size X-Men: Storm

by Russell Dauterman
& Matthew Wilson

















X-Men #8 God Loves, Man Kills Variant
by Marcos Martin



X-Men #10 Zombies Variant
by Ryan Brown



X-Men #10 Variant
by Phil Noto



X-Men #11 Empyre Variant
by Adam Kubert



X-Men #11 Days of Future Past Variant
by Javier Rodríguez



X-Men #16 Knullified Variant
by Iban Coello & Jesus Aburtov





X-Men #18 Black History Month Variant

by Ernanda Souza



MARVEL

\$3.99



WOMEN'S HISTORY

EMMA FROST

EST. 1980

#19

VARIANT
EDITION

X-MEN



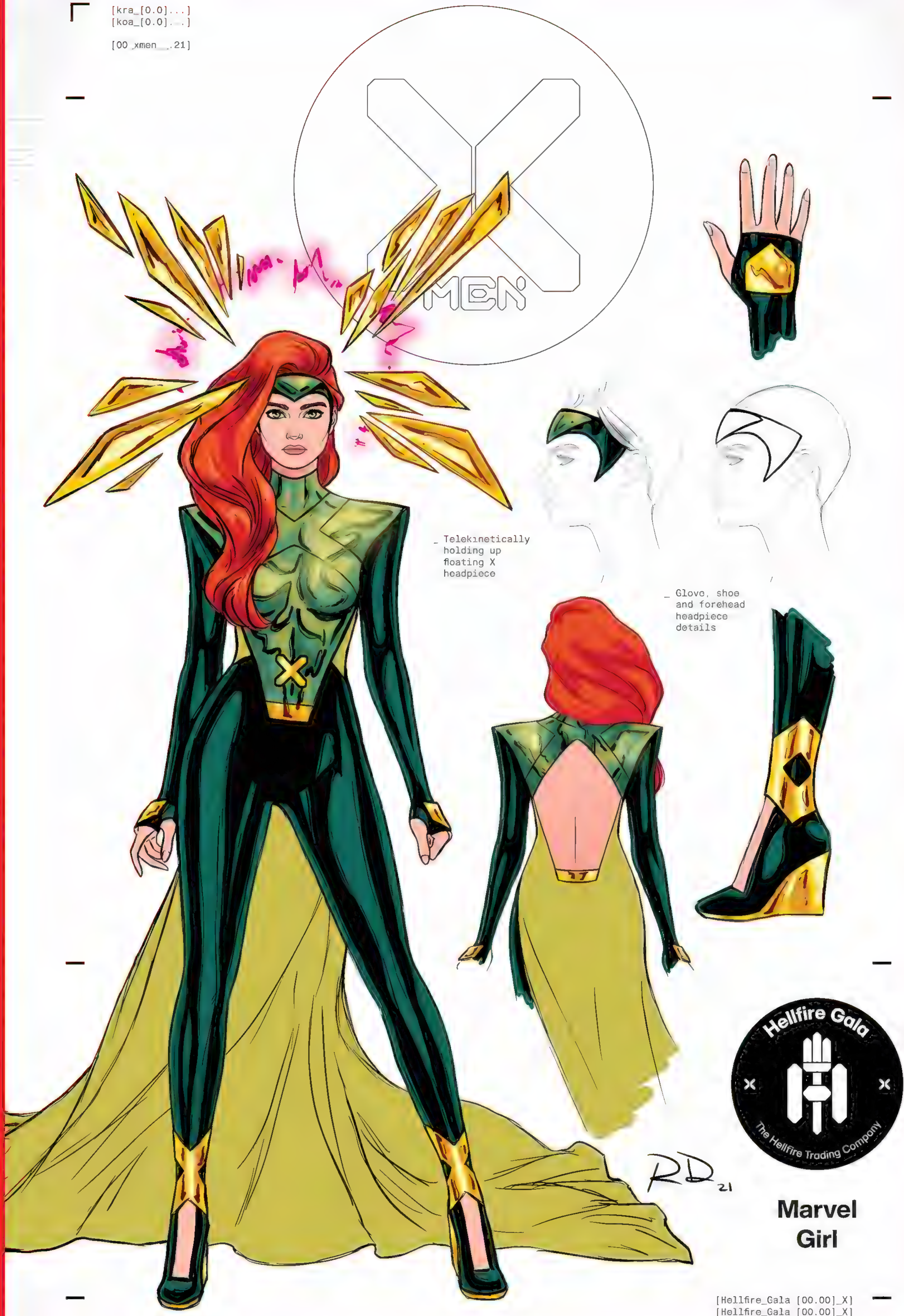
JEN
BAR
TEL



X-Men #20 Variant

by Mike del Mundo

[kra_[0.0]...]
[koa_[0.0]...]
[00_xmen_.21]





X-Men #21 Pride Month Variant
by Phil Jimenez & Marte Gracia



X-Men #21 Spider-Man Villains Variant
by Ema Lupacchino & David Curiel



X-Men #21 Character Design Variant
by Lucas Werneck



X-Men #21 Connecting Variant

by Russell Dauterman
& Matthew Wilson



Giant-Size X-Men: Magneto Variant

by Esad Ribić



Giant-Size X-Men: Fantomex Variant

by E.M. Gist



Giant-Size X-Men: Storm Variant

by Jen Bartel



Hickman
Larraz
Silva
Gracia

MARVEL

Jonathan Hickman completes his revolutionary reimagining of the X-Men!

Collecting:

X-Men (2019) #10-12 & #16-21
Giant-Size X-Men (2020):
 Magneto
Giant-Size X-Men (2020):
 Fantomex
Giant-Size X-Men (2020):
 Storm

The Summers family has made a home for itself on the moon, but now some new neighbors have moved in – and the trees are killing the children! Then the Shi’ar Empire asks the X-Men for help – and Cyclops, Storm and Marvel Girl answer the call! Elsewhere, the door to the Vault swings open at last – and for the beings who emerge, it’s been a very, very long time since they entered! And Krakoa’s future is at stake when one of mutantkind’s greatest threats returns: Nimrod is online! Meanwhile, it’s time for the Hellfire Gala – and a changing of the guard, as Krakoa’s first team of elected X-Men debuts! Plus: thrilling tales starring Magneto, Fantomex and Storm!

By:

Jonathan Hickman, Ramón K. Pérez, Rod Reis, Russell Dauterman, Leinil Francis Yu, Brett Booth, Mahmud Asrar, Francesco Mobili, Nick Dragotta, Lucas Werneck, Sara Pichelli, Gerry Alanguilan, Adelso Corona, Sunny Gho, Frank Martin, Matthew Wilson, David Curiel and Nolan Woodard.

